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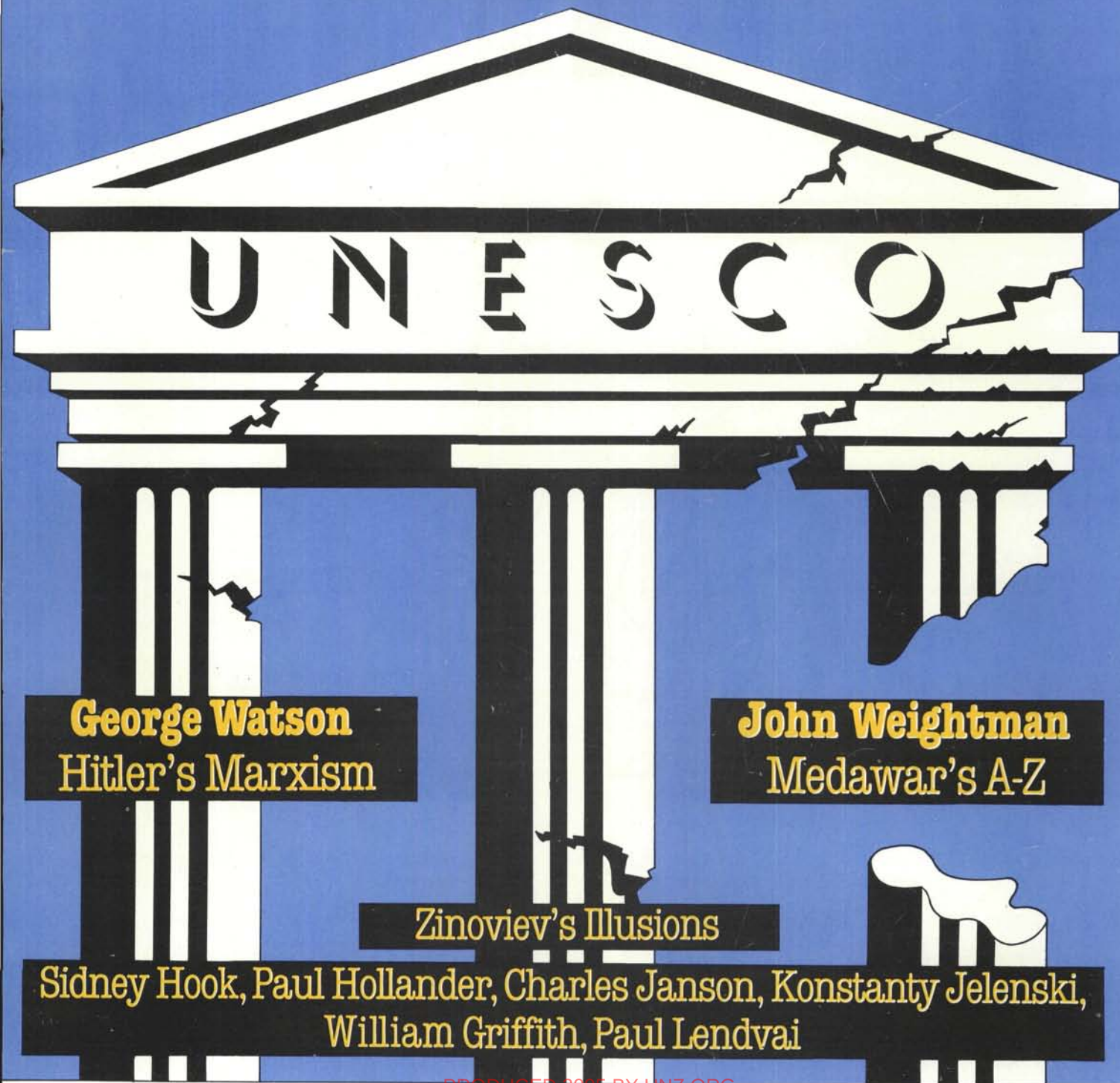
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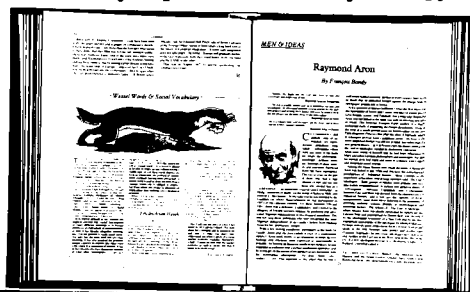
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MY GREAT-AUNT NELL owned a false breast of tan-coloured rubber, inflatable by a short tube, which she sometimes remembered to wear. More often than not she was likely to mislay it, especially on the point of her departure and I well remember one occasion when my brother, then aged about six, was sent back to the house to look for it. He retrieved it from under the bed in the spare room and bore it triumphantly to the gate. The breast was an object of some fascination but it did not occur to us that she could be lacking in one of the protuberances we had noticed on our mother and it was some years before the need for it was explained to us.

Aunt Nell, as we called her, descended on us about three times a year, to be met in my father's old Renault at the local railway station. We never failed to be impressed by the extent and variety of her luggage, which might include such items as a pair of antlers entwined with pink knitting wool or a canteen of tarnished silver cutlery. She was a small dumpy woman from Scotland, a doctor whose practice had all but deteriorated into a home for destitutes; those patients who were unable to pay their bills often ending up as permanent house guests. She had a kind heart coupled with an almost wilful lack of self-interest.

During these visits our house which was a substantial detached villa of brick and stucco would resound nightly to mighty snores. Yet she described herself, with some justification, as a light sleeper and at frequent intervals she would brew cocoa on an oil-stove in her room or while away the small hours making thick viscous toffee in a saucepan. Then once again the reverberations would begin. My brother slept through it all; I, in the room opposite hers, listened awestruck by the sheer volume of sound. But I was not unduly disturbed by these earthy manifestations. At a tender age I had discovered a copy of *Hamlet* which I hid under my pillow and read by candlelight. I could scarcely follow the text except for the opening sequences but these left a profound impression. For I was deeply enamoured of the ghost and each night I would rummage through to the scene where it finally gave utterance, indulging myself time and again in this consummation of delicious terror.

Like most children I was interested in the obscurities

surrounding birth and death, rightly suspecting a cover-up job by the adults. Darkness enclosed and symbolised these mysteries. I would start nervously at the brush of leaves against the window-pane from the beech trees outside the house or the wind moaning in the chimneys. Yet the snores of Aunt Nell, the creaking of floor-boards when she stirred to light the stove, were sounds I found acceptable, even reassuring. A peculiar aroma lingered in her room for weeks after she left: a mixture of camphor, Wright's coal tar soap and something reminiscent of freshly prepared infant food.

My brother and I took such events for granted. For this was England during the early 1930s, when communication outside the family network was minimal, limited to church, school, encounters in the village or trips to the market town of Gloucester, some miles away. The villa was lit by gas, and cooking in the blue and yellow painted kitchen was done on an iron range. Apart from the local post office, ours was the only house in the district with a telephone.

Downstairs, at the piano my father had bought her for twenty-five pounds, my mother would play Chopin, Scott Joplin and popular tunes of the period. My father spent his week-ends at the typewriter composing his science fiction articles or tinkering with the Renault. A long wild garden remained untended.

The house was full of wonders. On the book-shelves were the novels of Michael Arlen, Rafael Sabatini and Elinor Glyn, as well as my father's copies of H. G. Wells and bound copies of *Science and Invention*. In the kitchen cupboard we discovered *The Road to Buenos Aires* and *The Wandering Jew* which previous tenants had failed to return to the chain library. The complete works of Shakespeare lay in the box-room together with a harp, a collection of empty suitcases, my father's R.A.F. uniform and a set of Hogarth prints portraying "The Age of Cruelty." The last, a wedding gift to my parents from my father's mother, still lay in its brown paper wrappings.

BOTH GRANDMOTHERS, one a widow, the other an exile, lived in a remote village near the Berkshire downs. There were other relatives

scattered from the Highlands of Scotland to the lush vales of Dorset, some of whom would materialise briefly and dazzlingly like shooting stars: uncles in the Merchant Navy, dark and glowing from voyages to the Orient; elegant and leggy aunts in home-made clothes on the pillions of motor-bikes, skirts above the knee and scarves flying, hugging the waists of beaming young men. Most of them were poor, either genteel or disinherited. For the family consisted of innocents with scarcely a businessman or a hard head among them. My mother's people came from Shaftesbury; her father, an old man when she was born and a life-long fundamentalist and radical, had died a bankrupt leaving a widow and four children. On my father's side they were an equally unworldly set, the men devotees of county cricket, educated for medicine or the army; the women, when unmarried, often ending up as governesses or teachers of ballroom dancing. There was an astonishing degree of social mobility up and down the scale and in spite of the fact that divorce abounded among my father's relations (to the extent that one could almost describe them as social pioneers in the field) family ties were strong.

Our parents were still comparatively young; turbulent, full of impulsive plans and sudden moods. We found them unpredictable but this seemed as it should be. What other parents did we know, except to nod to politely at church, or to see with their little processions cross the village green? What went on behind those other garden walls? The brick villa was inviolate. Besides the harp there was a banjo and a stately grandfather clock brought by my mother to this hired house with its five bedrooms, Turkey carpets, chiffoniers and heavy mahogany furniture. The centre of the village was half a mile away, reached by a lane punctuated by other solid brick houses at the end of gravel drives fringed by shrubberies. My brother and I did not relish our sorties to the village. The children from the cottages and the row of dun-coloured pebble-dash council houses followed us jeering. This was doubtless because of our long hair which, being fuzzy and fair, gave us the appearance of walking dandelion clocks. For my mother the length and frizziness of our hair was the badge of our uniqueness. Of sound Dorset shop-keeping stock herself, she was proud of the eccentricities of my father's family which had boasted a peer of the realm among its antecedents. Aunt Nell, although she must have been a trial, was no exception.

My father's mother had also studied medicine. These two girls, who had bathed on the shores of Loch Ness in the 1880s (where "the beastie" was even then well known), lived at Moy, a hamlet outside Inverness. Their father, after making his fortune in Montreal, had returned to his homeland to marry and settle down, and the girls, the youngest of a large brood, were allowed a free rein. Although gifted and even brilliant by academic standards, neither of them displayed any proficiency in the domestic arts. Their connections on their mother's side included Robert Louis Stevenson, and a vague

respect was accorded to literary and artistic aspirations. But arrangements in the household were chaotic and the maidservants (or "drotchels" as they were called) did much as they pleased.

The family, belonging to the Clan Macdonald, had originally come from Stornoway in the Outer Hebrides, but most of its members had emigrated during the notorious Highland Clearances, some to Canada, others to the United States. After the Civil War the US government offered large tracts of land in Florida to anyone able to cultivate oranges or pineapples, and it was to America that my grandmother went when she came into her inheritance, to stay with the pineapple growers. As well as Florida she visited relatives in New York, and we still have an old plush-framed photograph taken in 1888 showing my grandmother in a black bombazine dress with a bustle, leaning pensively on a rustic wooden seat against a background of potted palms. The photographer was a Mr Fredericks and his studio was on Broadway, now the site of the Chase-Manhattan Bank.

THE AGE WAS ONE OF ROMANTICISM, free enterprise and adventure. It also saw the rise of a vigorous women's movement. My grandmother and Aunt Nell decided to follow in the footsteps of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and train in medicine. They attended the Royal Free School of Medicine which had just begun to take in women students and they also, more daringly, went to lectures at Guy's Hospital. Aunt Nell stayed the course and qualified but my grandmother met and married a fellow student whose family home was at Kingston Bagpuize, a village near the Vale of the White Horse with one or two fine country houses. He later practised there after his father was struck down with pneumonia.

My grandmother was ill at ease in an English establishment presided over by her mother-in-law (who was still riding to hounds in her sixties) and filled with her husband's relatives. The ordered ways of the household were foreign to her, the preoccupations with hunting and calling-cards. She would abscond for long intervals to Scotland taking her small children, my father and his two sisters with her.

By this time Aunt Nell after an unsuccessful attempt to set up on her own had had a stroke of good fortune. Probably due to a dearth of other applicants, she was appointed Medical Officer of Health for the Highlands and Islands. This involved travelling to remote areas, and as a brother-in-law then owned the local steamship company, calls were made regularly at all the small outer islands where this buxom little woman, stepping across gang-planks on the quays, or being rowed across choppy waters to some sandy, bouldered shore, became a familiar figure. In those days of delayed and sometimes erratic communications she must often have been a welcome sight. Heaven alone knew what medicine was used in emergencies. But with her Gladstone bag and a

couple of stalwart lads she seemed ready to deal with any eventuality. On the mainland she was not above halting a through train by pulling the communication cord, and the driver, respecting her wishes, would draw up on the railway platform of some village where her services were needed. Such was her reputation that even the drivers of the London-bound trains bowed to her. In the early years of my grandmother's marriage she was a frequent visitor to the house at Kingston Bagpuize and, a party to my grandmother's schemes, she would sometimes convey family belongings or wedding presents back to the Highlands. My father remembered, as a small child, one occasion on the Euston to Inverness express, seeing his aunt emerge from the bunk below in her lace-trimmed flannel nightdress and cap to demand the guard. It transpired that two of my grandmother's gilt-framed mirrors entrusted to her were in the guard's van in close proximity to a flat-iron, and she was anxious to ensure that the mirrors had been properly packaged and were still intact. A whole train-load of passengers woken at 3 a.m. waited while Aunt Nell, still dressed in her night gear, marched the length of the train with the guard and persuaded him to unload the package on the platform at Crewe and open it up while the driver patiently attended them.

Eventually, after some bizarre scenes at the English country house, my grandmother departed for good and Aunt Nell took over the upbringing of my father and his two sisters. Snatched from the ministrations of governesses and servants, they were plunged into the hurly-burly and free-for-all of Scottish life. The children were sent to the Inverness Academy under the eye of my formidable great-aunt while my grandfather, no doubt unhinged by his marriage, left his respectable Berkshire practice to pursue an extraordinary career across Europe, becoming at one time court physician to Alfonso of Spain and later a friend of Havelock Ellis, Morton Prince and Sigmund Freud, to end up as a fashionable "nerve specialist" in the Home Counties. A number of distinguished Edwardians recovered their wits at his nursing home near Reading or attended his consulting rooms in a Queen Anne house in the city. Here curtains of mauve and white striped taffeta framed windows looking out on to a walled garden where a lawn with a weeping willow was banked by lavender and flower borders. My grandfather had an instinct for atmosphere and his home was carefully tended. He also hated changes and Archie, his chauffeur, gardener and general factotum, had been with him for many years, accompanying him on his travels. He was, too, in spite of his rather freakish erudition, something of a sportsman and owned a hundred acres of shooting in his native county. Every so often we would see his name in the newspapers, and my grandfather's dilemmas ("Should a doctor tell?" "Patient's husband names doctor as co-respondent", "Doctor refutes abortion charge", etc.), together with the court martial of an uncle in the Indian Army accused of sodomy, inspired in my father fresh outbursts of enthusiasm. Such colourful activities

entranced him. He was, like so many of the uprooted, in love with his lineage, and my mother restrained him with difficulty from taking steps to rescue the earldom which had lapsed into Chancery after the death of an elderly bachelor great-uncle. The estate was entailed, carried a heavy burden of debt, and had long since been written off by my grandfather, the next in line. An aunt of his whose fortune might have enabled him to maintain the property had left her money to a cats' home, and my father's efforts to reinstate the title would—had he known about them—have met with a lukewarm response from my grandfather, one of whose main anxieties about this time was to elude further publicity.

THE IRREGULAR LIFE of my peripatetic grandfather became the subject of speculation among members of my parents' circle. The advent of each news headline in which he figured caused a ripple of curiosity. "What made him do it?" "You'd think there had been enough goings-on already."

"Well, what did you expect?" said my mother. "They're all crazy." Only then did she begin to cut our hair. My mother's relations, gifted children of the indigent evangelist, sometimes expressed misgivings but more often than not a mildly scandalised appreciation. (They had had their fill of sanctity.) Gentry were expected to behave oddly. And my mother's eyes once more grew bemused, she would play Chopin, let the potatoes burn on the range, allow our hair to grow and our misery to return. At such times she experienced a secret gratification at having married into a family of distinguished deviants. Neither she nor my father seemed aware of the advantages of mediocrity, advantages which glowed unattainably like some mirage for me and my brother who longed for grey-haired parents of impeccably bourgeois origins.

From the earliest years we were regaled with the story of the Light Brigade and the famous Charge led by Captain Nolan, another family connection on my father's side. Stoicism in the face of danger was enjoined. "But he carried the wrong order", we once expostulated. No matter. He died like a hero. We were urged to emulate his bravery, particularly at the dentist's, and the lesson must have gone deep for years later, as an adult, coming round from an appendectomy the thought flashed through my mind: "Remember the Light Brigade."

Fortitude in all circumstances was the maxim of my father who had survived seven air crashes, fought in Egypt, and contracted malaria, all by the time he was twenty. A martyr to a host of minor but painful physical ailments most of the time, he never forgot to point out to his children how fortunate they were to be alive at all and born into a society of any sort; it was as well to remember that prehistoric man had even more to contend with. On the whole my father took the view that the individual should conform to society and its demands; life was to be

seen as a sort of endurance test. At the same time he was a disciple of the works of H. G. Wells, and the future portrayed in his own science fiction was influenced by the master: a Utopia with a controlled population tended by robots, with time for metaphysical discussions and the appreciation of beauty—a world striking to us for its seeming absence of children. As well as visions of a glorious past these were the dreams that sustained my father. There was no talk of religion in our home. But I read the Bible surreptitiously and won a prize for scripture at school. This would no doubt have puzzled my parents had they learned of it. Subjected themselves to a strict religious upbringing they preserved an attitude of almost total indifference to the subject.

Both my Aunt Nell and my paternal grandmother were fervent members of the Scottish Presbyterian kirk. My grandmother, who had eventually made her home with one of her daughters, was extremely devout. A tall, gaunt woman with ringleted white hair, dressed invariably in black, I remember her reproving my brother when, in imitation of some village child, he thumbed his nose at her and waved his fingers. "Never let me see you do that again, laddie", she said severely in her croaking Highland drawl. "A blasphemy!"

We asked her what it meant and, pressed, she retorted, "Go to the Everlasting Flame!" We thought this a truly impressive invective. Very often when confronted by childish wilfulness she would roll her eyes upwards and exclaim, "Mercy!" Words in her mouth became charged with a fateful meaning.

Those Highland accents were deeply evocative—there was an almost embarrassing intimacy about their throatiness, a closeness to nature and to the earth. Both my grandmother and my Aunt Nell were conversant with Gaelic, the language of those primitive Celts who hailed originally from the northern islands of the west coast of Scotland: Lewis, Uist and Benbecula. In our blood there doubtless lingered an old racial sadness bred by long winters of gales and roaring seas and the cruel barrenness of the land, some inborn memory of fearful hardship and monotony broken by the sudden elation of savagery and feuding among the clans. My grandmother, we sensed, had succumbed; even the bustling crankiness of Aunt Nell took on a faintly ominous aspect when she reached for her stethoscope and sounded my father's naked chest, making gloomy prognostications about his bronchial troubles.

MY CHILDHOOD WAS WIDELY pervaded by a sense of the occult; I divined mysteries. Doctors, who inhabited so firmly the physical dimension, were also masters of dark forces, invested with supernormal powers. And the rigmarole of the internal organs never ceased to inspire awe. My father had inherited a collection of old medical encyclopaedias, now relegated to the hen-house at the end of the garden. These contained a wealth

of illustrations of the human anatomy, including a number of arresting colour plates, providing a feast of horrors. Childbirth in particular seemed fraught with extraordinary hazards and complications, an impression which was reinforced some years later when, opening a drawer of a desk in my grandfather's study, I came across what looked like a large pair of scissors with blunt angled blades. This turned out to be an instrument used for crushing the head of an unborn baby when the mother's life took precedence over that of the child's.

This study of my grandfather's was very different from anything in my great-aunt's shabby terraced house in Inverness. Lined with the works of Havelock Ellis and Freud, with a large mezzotint of the "Charge" over the mantelpiece and its aroma of Havana cigars, it was a male sanctum. And it had a certain air of homeliness in contrast to the library where the furniture was of natural polished elm and bowls of freshly cut flowers were carefully arranged. Here were rows of the Latin poets: Catullus, Propertius, Horace and Johannes Secundus bound in white, and the English classics in blue leather with gilt lettering, all from Bumpus. There were also first editions of modern works, some by eminent patients. Such surroundings, compared with the squalid Scottish haven for penurious invalids and tramps, seemed designed to give a sense of well-being. Yet this gentlemanly and fastidious man with his tomes on sexual deviation, his bound volumes of Latin erotica, was endowed for me with an aura of agreeable menace. As befitted a practitioner of the sophisticated and sinister arts in my eyes.

AUNT NELL'S ATTITUDE to her work was different: crude, tender, primitive, parochial. Yet they had this in common: the clue to the mysteries. My tall, cigar-smoking grandfather, in his youth the epitome of Edwardian elegance, held the key to the secrets of the mind. He understood the body as a machine whose faults were to be dealt with precisely like the upkeep of his motor car: his was the cerebral approach. Only the psyche was imbued with the equivalent of his beloved poetry, a never-ending source of enchantment. A practical and commonsensical man in many ways, politically a natural conservative in spite of his own adventures, he was yet fascinated by the neurotic mind and its sometimes exuberant fantasies. When he had completed his treatment, the patient was presented with a copy of James Stephens' *The Crock of Gold* bound in green and gold leather.

There were other doctors in the family; some developed into hypochondriacs or became involved with wealthy and promiscuous women or died of crippling diseases. My grandfather survived and so did Aunt Nell. In fact he was to outlive the two sisters by many years.

The last I saw of Aunt Nell was in a September after the War when she had finally succumbed to the cancer which had lain dormant for so many years, and was

nearing her end. My father drove me down to Childrey where she had retired to a bungalow of almost brutal vulgarity which she had built after tearing down the 14th-century cottage which had once housed my parents—a place I remember chiefly for its musky odour of old timber and thatch, the steep wooden stairs with the heavy latched door, and a garden filled with nettles where a toad lived. The bungalow which had replaced it, with its peeling façade painted a bilious green, we found in an advanced state of dilapidation. Through a bedroom window which gave off a distempered hall crowded with antlers, oak stands and old tin trunks, we glimpsed a four-poster bed covered in grimy blankets and some fine silk patchwork, stained and yellowing. Apple trees outside the window dappled the room with sunlight, revealing a thick haze of dust.

The parlour was furnished with tasselled plush and mahogany. Chickens wandered in and out from the yard, pecking at crumbs or decayed titbits half trodden into the worn Turkey carpet. Here Aunt Nell sat on a shiny horsehair sofa, neat and clean in her person as always, serenely oblivious to the slovenliness of her surroundings. Out in the scullery the housekeeper, a native of Inverness who had a way of turning her eyes upwards as she talked so that only the whites were visible, stirred broth in a saucepan, interrupting her labours only to make us a pot of tea. Aunt Nell seemed shrunken and sallow but the richly inflected Highland accent was the same, recreating for me the dark primordial glamour of childhood. She spoke of Culloden and an ancestral pot used to cook on the battlefield and treasured by the family for generations, which she had bequeathed to my father. There was also the patchwork, said to be made from clothes worn by Bonny Prince Charlie, and Flora Macdonald's cloak of black velvet, lined with lilac moiré silk. The thought of approaching death seemed to lie lightly upon her, it was as though the essence of her being, no longer swamped in the coarse flesh, had been distilled; she was now waspishly thin. As we left she took my father's hand. "She's a real Macdonald", she said, looking at me. And there was true sentiment in her regard so that I experienced a sudden sense of continuity with the generations which I quickly laid aside, in the manner of young people.

"It became too much trouble in the end, even to feed the hens", my father said on the way home in reply to my observations (for I was intrigued by the neglect, the almost magnificently careless squalor in which she and her companion lived). "It's easy enough to get like that."

His tone was philosophic: life was an unending battle against the other forces of nature, an environment innately hostile. This was a fact that one took for granted. Aunt Nell, however, seemed hardly aware of the inequality of the struggle. She remained to the end supremely invulnerable to the material world, safeguarded perhaps by her chosen profession, her sense of mission.

She died a few weeks later and my father drove back

to the bungalow to find her body on the horsehair sofa in the front parlour, almost mummified in front of a roaring fire. The housekeeper was dilatory about such matters and was loth to call the undertaker until my father had paid his respects.

Later it transpired that the pot she was so anxious for us to have was a fake. The genuine article had been sold to visiting Americans some fifty years before, and another put in its place. Such iron utensils scarcely altered over the centuries. My father shrugged and eventually it was added to his repertoire of after-dinner stories.

In fact I suspect that Aunt Nell became a valued embellishment to the narrative of his heritage. Other families had their skeletons but my father's cupboard contained a fine hoard which he took endless pleasure in exhibiting. He too, being an original in his way, savoured the curious and the exotic, and whatever food for discussion they provided, with my mother a willing partaker and contributor. This was still the age of the extended family, a vital thread of communication running across the counties. Another town was still foreign terrain; in a way everything outside one's own surroundings and immediate experience remained mythical. We relied on books, travellers' tales, the radio and, of course, the cinema. "The pictures" conveyed a powerful magic, perhaps the most potent fable of them all.

In Gloucester market with its domed glass roof and smell of fresh fish were stalls where American film magazines, thick and glossy, were to be found among old copies of *The Magnet*. Lavishly produced photographs of film stars, with burnished hair aureoled against a discreet radiance, fed the daydreams of the pubescent young.

BOTH MY GRANDMOTHERS, ill at ease during this decade of screen goddesses and popular allure, retreated into their religion, shoring themselves against the tide of these alien influences. Sin still consisted of the demon drink and the lusts of the flesh, but the forces of evil were no longer so easily identifiable, divine creation was losing its pristine clarity. My Scottish grandmother, her eyes glazed, chanted from the New Testament and pored over copies of the *Christian Herald*; the other became increasingly immersed in the doings of her local chapel.

One night, reading the Bible in the small hours, I experienced a sense of ennui, even of despair, at the succession of "begats" in the Book of Chronicles. There must be more to life than this tale of past generations and obsessive worship. That primal, clandestine magic had departed and I gave up reading the Bible.

My paternal grandfather remained secure, at the heart of psychic power. When he accompanied me to the cinema in Reading he slept through much of the programme but was always too courteous to admit it.

Adhering to the strict régime of the diabetic, he lived to a ripe old age and became, in spite of his lurid past, a pillar of the British Medical Association. By then Freud was respectable.

In the main he was receptive to new ideas, dismissing only what lay outside his province as “rum”; always abhorring jargon, which he said gave him the wind. He belonged to the quaint avant-garde of an older generation, acceptable to his grandchildren, often able to temper their excesses with a laconic wisdom. He was, after all, an intimate of the insane, those unconscious rebels against conformity. He died of a stroke, active until almost the end, a strong advertisement for those who go on working until well into their eighties. With his passing our family lost a focus and gradually disintegrated into its separate entities. Only the family photographs were there to remind us: an early one of Aunt Nell, round-faced in a high-necked blouse, her hair strained back from a childishly unfurrowed brow; my grandmother, stately when young, spectrally thin and sibylline in the snapshots of her later years; and the succession of studio portraits of my grandfather. The last of these shows him in a summer suit of cream shantung, a flower in his buttonhole, the extravagantly wavy hair now a fuzz of silver, the drooping moustache carefully curled. There were no pictures of their wedding.

My father and his sisters, the fruit of that strangely

assorted union, were willing accomplices of their destiny. They, too, were victims, in the way of all parents and children as the weight of the generations presses on us, whatever the temporal distractions of the era. Buried deep in the psyche are those iron determinants, welded by unpredictable and wayward-seeming forces. To bestow a feeling that if this or that had not happened: that letter not posted, that ring of the telephone left unanswered, that hand not beckoned, a soul might never have come into being. Such thoughts—banal, fundamental, making the mind tip—occur in the unguarded moments of even the best-organised lives. Predestination or chance? Who knows? The gravity of the situation is appalling, underlying every decision.

A photograph, an entry in a medical directory, a short obituary column in a newspaper were all that posterity spared to Aunt Nell. In the photograph she stares back from behind her pince-nez, stubby-nosed, perky, uncompromising.

My grandfather reigns in the silver frame on the mantelpiece, with Archie sitting by his side in one of the first motor cars in Berkshire. They both look younger by far than we ever remember them. Archie wears a peaked cap and uniform, my grandfather an alpaca jacket and a straw hat which leaves his eyes in shadow, revealing only the curled moustache and the first faint hint of those noble jowls.

On the Lookout

Eleven fifteen at night. The bell rings.
He walks up the corridor to open the door;
two figures loom in the frosted glass.
His foot presses hard against the wood;
he knows them, they have been before.

He snaps the door shut, wheels around
and they fire from the sawn-off shotgun.
On the carpet, glass like crystals of ice.
The boy who was spending the night dials 999.
They make the hospital within the hour.

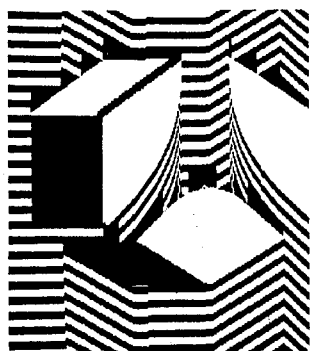
He has to stay in for a while
for the peppered gunshot to work its way out.
Only close friends know. His parents
he tells later—but not the whole story.
They are shocked by the violence in the city—

unaware he cruises the East End at night,
in his old Mercedes, always on the lookout.
They know he shares the flat with seven cats
but nothing of the others who come and go,
taking what they can, giving what he wants.

Felicity Napier

The Decline & Fall of Unesco

A Report from Paris



IN THE BEGINNING it was confounded with a Romanian composer (Enesco), a popular American biscuit company (Nabisco), a radical-chic Mexican painter (Orozco), and with something that Evelyn Waugh invented when one of his African characters (in *Black Mischief*) began rearranging letters in order to get alphabetic impact for his life-sustaining vitamin-rich diet. Thus, its very name had doubtless something to do with its disorientation and subsequent undoing. The point of the UN itself was clear enough: sovereign nations were to look beyond their national power in order to preserve the peace. What benighted inspiration was it to drive them into the realms of education and science and culture? Most of the nations assembled in the UN had trouble enough keeping to the letter of constitutionalism and a semblance of democracy and human rights. To open up a second "cultural front" when the first front of diplomatic international relations was already such a shambles could only come from the inspired unrealism of a mind like Julian Huxley's. All the world was a stage for doing good, and now was the time for all good men to join and do it together.

"Since wars begin in the minds of man, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed [according to UNESCO's 1945 preamble]. The great and terrible war which has now ended was a war made possible by the denial of democratic principles of the dignity, equality and mutual respect of men, and by the propagation, in their place, through ignorance and prejudice, of the doctrine of the inequality of men and races. The peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind."

Perhaps more than any other part of the UN system, UNESCO now reminds us that the humane values of the liberal democracies—the "intellectual and moral solidarity" of the organisation's founders—are the most difficult to protect. The 161-member organisation, founded by some 20 post-War constitutional democracies, now serves the majority of

anti-democratic countries, ruled by unrepresentative and unelected leaders, running the modern governmental gamut from tin-pot authoritarian to iron-walled totalitarian. The mid-century's unlearned lesson—although taught by savants from Tocqueville to Aron—is that the special interest among these ruling political classes is holding on to state power, frustrating the aspirations of citizens for genuine self-determination. Where were the dissident, heretical Huxleys to rewrite the ruling ideology to conform with the UNESCO preamble? Liberalism in the West, after all, came only after democratic revolutions.

The current Paris régime of Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow has shown that organisations like UNESCO now serve largely to legitimate the congeries of illiberal values that guide such dictators, enforcing their authoritarian hand against any possible pressures at home to move towards Western-style liberalism. Mr M'Bow, Director-General of UNESCO, is appropriately known in his Paris headquarters as "Boss." A former civil servant from Senegal, he has with his extraordinary term of office forced the West to take another look at the organisation, which is intended to serve noble cultural ideals. As I write, the United States intends to leave UNESCO on 31 December 1984. Britain, West Germany, and other democracies have indicated that they may follow.

As the deadline approached, the M'Bow administration's defensive work-rate rose as on a fever chart. On 7 September the *Daily Telegraph* reported from Paris, "TALKS SOON ON UNESCO REFORM: The British role . . . has been to ensure that all key Western approaches are fully considered" (whatever that may mean).

A few days later the *International Herald Tribune* (8/9 September) revealed, not unsurprisingly, that the study which Mr M'Bow had commissioned in May from a group of present and former UNESCO officials would not be a whitewash: "The report charges that UNESCO programmes suffer from duplication and overlapping, unsatisfactory guidance and a failure at top management levels to coordinate activities. . . ." A week later (Associated Press, 13 September) it was announced:

"A top UNESCO official said Wednesday that the United States would receive its share of \$80 million in unspent agency funds but he would not say if payment would be made before the end of the year, when a U.S. withdrawal from the organization is scheduled.

'Don't worry, you'll get the cash', Gerard Bolla, the deputy director-general, said at a press conference. . . ."

But the couple of million, one way or the other, was the least of it. "UNESCO has extraneously politicised virtually every subject it deals with." This was the charge of Gregory Newall (US Assistant Secretary for international organisation affairs) when he announced the planned American withdrawal in December 1983.

"It has exhibited hostility toward a free society, especially a free market and a free press, and it has demonstrated unrestrained budgetary expansion."

The evidence was, unfortunately, only too abundant.

More than that, the whole conflict has become a personal issue of the Director-General's own survival. The general criticisms of administration and policy were essentially, as *The Times* (London, 18 September) summed it up, "a clear indictment of the Director-General himself. . . ."

"Mr Mbow, who is from Senegal, has been Director-General of Unesco for 10 years. A number of people, inside and outside the organization, hold him personally responsible for many of Unesco's problems. They see him as highly intelligent and with a great capacity to charm, but also as arrogant, power-seeking, and highly autocratic. He is said to rule his secretariat with an iron hand."

The question is whether he will be able to cover that iron hand with a credible enough velvet glove. For he

"has the solid backing [Diana Geddes writes from Paris in *The Times*] of most of the African and Third World countries, and they form a majority of the Unesco member-states. It is, therefore, counterproductive to attack him personally or to advocate too sweeping changes, others argue. Far better to get together a package of perhaps fairly modest reforms with the aim of carrying some of the more moderate Third World countries along with you."

NOR ARE THE AMERICANS quite certain of carrying European Foreign Offices along with them, what with Hans-Dieter Genscher's penchant in Bonn for nice harmless arrangements and Sir Geoffrey Howe's feeling for patched-up compromises.

"Britain belongs to the group of Western countries which are now advocating the middle path between all-out reform and no reform at all. For its pains, it has been accused of 'soft-peddalling', but believes that its approach of behind-the-scenes diplomacy and consensus will achieve more in the long run than America's bulldozer-like methods."

The Times was rather more sympathetic than the *Sunday Times*, whose Rosemary Richter, their sharp-tongued correspondent, in a dispatch from Paris (22 October 1984) wrote:

"The traditional British love of compromise could result in losing probably the best opportunity ever to effect changes in the mismanaged and irresponsibly politicised UNESCO. . . . The British performance has been schizophrenic and utterly confusing."

1. "New International Economic Order"



THE GROUP OF 77, the name adopted by the underdeveloped countries in the mid-1970s (there are now closer to 100), has the stated goal of raising the living standards of its peoples. In what is invariably called the "post-imperial" period, despite the uninvited

Soviet imperial presence in much of the Third World, the underdeveloped nations demand a redistribution of wealth from those-who-have to those-who-don't. This is the central tenet of the much-publicised "North-South dialogue", and "redistribution" is in fact a shorthand definition of "the New International Economic Order." This shibboleth dates from a 1974 UN General Assembly resolution, and is a central goal in UNESCO activities.

The most recent general conference, in the autumn of 1983, passed the following resolution:

"The New International Economic Order calls for an urgent restructuring of international economic relations that takes the interests and needs of all countries into account and that establishes between them the basis for fresh cooperation in which they will participate equitably within the framework of a genuine international community and where the identity of each country will be respected."¹

A translation of the UN-style jargon centres on several fashionable concepts: "restructuring . . . fresh cooperation . . . equitable participation . . . genuine international community."

This is not at all the language of, say, Taiwan or Hong Kong or the Ivory Coast or any of the other less- (formerly under-) developed countries that are cooperating with the more developed West in the existing "unstructured" international community. It is rather the language of certain régimes whose ideology disallows economic growth, as it does the best method for growth—an open, variegated, free economy. Underdeveloped countries are urged to form cartels, to protect their markets, to rationalise or "socialise", and to demand guilt-induced aid money from the former "imperialists." Our guilt makes for their entitlement; our fears (that the Brandt-inspired South will rise up violently against the selfish North) make for appeasement.

Moreover, judging by the policies Mr M'Bow advocates in UNESCO, sophisticated Third-Worlders may no longer actually believe in "economic growth"—despite the starvation, sickness, distressing death rates, etc., that plague their countries. "No doubt economic growth and the production of material goods will always be vitally important because of the essential contribution they alone can make to the general welfare", he acknowledges in his manifesto:

"but they should serve purposes consciously accepted by all, that enrich everyone's life, increase the creative capacities

¹ "Resolutions, Records of the General Conference", Twenty-Second Session, Paris, 25 October to 26 November 1983.

of the entire population and have their roots in cultures with all that implies as regards truth to self and receptivity to progress."

The nostrums of recent Western trendiness about "no-growth" economies are embraced on behalf of those who need growth most—the poor. "Increasing concern is being expressed", writes Mr M'Bow, "in regard to the excesses or limitations of the search for greater productivity."²

The "New International Economic Order" is part of UNESCO's major programme—called, solemnly, "Principles, Methods and Strategies of Action for Development." This 18-million-dollar undertaking is a relentless search for the foreign devils who are well known to be the cause of poverty. One project calls for "further training of higher professional personnel so that they may perceive the impact of the activities of transnational corporations in UNESCO's fields of competence." When they hear the word corporation they reach for their seminar.

² Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, *Where the Future Begins* (UNESCO Publishers, 1982), pp. 28, 75.

³ *Approved Programme and Budget for 1983-85* (Paris, January 1984), pp. 315, 317.

"The execution of studies on the curbs imposed by the activities of transnational corporations on countries' autonomy . . . educational materials will be prepared for this purpose on the basis of the aforementioned case-studies: tested and finalised during the international seminar, these materials will be reproduced and given wide distribution."³

The myriad UNESCO seminars and conferences to discuss how to avoid the evils of growth induced by hateful foreign investment from sinister private companies are described in an appendix to the most recent budget. They include:

"Training seminar for development project planners and administrators on the theory and practice of endogenous development" (18 participants for five days).

"International study seminar on the different meanings attributed to the notion of planning" (15 participants for five days).

"Panel of experts on the socio-cultural factors likely to facilitate integrated planning" (12 participants for five days).

"Sub-regional symposia on the critical analysis of development planning methods" (24 participants for twelve days).

The mythology of this world-view has been described by Peter Bauer, a leading development economist:

Neutral Party?

THE FOLLOWING is an excerpt from the House of Lords debate on 25 January 1984. John Vaizey died, at the age of 54, in July this year. He was a stimulating economist, a tireless critic of social trends, and a valued ENCOUNTER contributor.



LORD VAIZEY: First, are the Government satisfied that, with other like-minded Governments, we have exerted sufficient pressure to contain the budgetary expansion of UNESCO? Secondly, are they satisfied that every effort is being made to restrain the extravagance and inefficiency at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris? I do not speak about the work in the field. Thirdly, are they satisfied that Mr M'Bow has proved an effective director-general of the United Nations agency, and what attitude will they take to his forthcoming campaign for re-election? Fourthly, are Her Majesty's Government satisfied that the threat to the free flow of information caused by UNESCO's proposed Third World censorship programme has been staved off? Lastly, are the Government satisfied that the serious damage to human rights entailed in UNESCO's support of so-called people's rights has also been limited?

Behind these five specific questions lies a more general anxiety. It is this. Successive Western Governments have not taken UNESCO seriously. It has been allowed to become a major centre of anti-Western agi-

tation and propaganda. When Israel was expelled from UNESCO in the mid-1970s the United States, under the then presidency of President Carter, withdrew its support and Israel was promptly re-admitted. Now the United States has finally announced that it will resign from the organisation.

I SPEAK with 25 years experience of UNESCO. Many of us feel that, on balance, other Western Governments, including our own, should also cut their losses—though I must admit that the Foreign Office has already announced that we shall not withdraw. I wonder whether that decision is correct and whether it is not a bit precipitate. . . .

There are two areas where the torrent of anti-Western propaganda represents a real danger to Western values, which are upheld in all parts of this House. The first concerns human rights, which is the one issue about which I feel absolutely passionately. UNESCO has got into the human rights act on the somewhat spurious ground of education for human rights and research into the question. The Swiss national who was responsible for this part of UNESCO's programme has resigned on principle and has been replaced by a Trinidadian, Mrs O'Callaghan, a far-Left Marxist, who has pursued the director-general's concept (borrowed from the Soviet Union) of people's rights.

PEOPLE'S RIGHTS are the direct opposite of human rights. Human rights are, of course, dismissed as a bourgeois fantasy, and people's rights are based on the concept of tribal and racial purity. They are, for example, the basis of the virulent anti-Semitism and bitter hostility to the state of

Israel. Those people who have not listened to the debates at UNESCO ought to go and listen to them because they are quite horrifying.

The usual anti-apartheid resolutions are also passed, but there is never any serious attempt to understand or to interpret the roots of apartheid. The propaganda is so one-sided. There is never any reference to the Ayatollah and the position of people in Iran, for example, let alone any reference to other parts of the Third World, nor, of course, to the Soviet empire.

The development of a concept of people's rights is a most sinister and deplorable aspect of United Nations activities. Those of us who are deeply concerned with human rights now regard UNESCO not as a neutral party but as a dangerous enemy of the rights of the individual. I may say that the rights of individuals, whatever the colour of their skins, are equally important, and must not be dismissed merely as a package of Western values which the imperialists are trying to impose on the ex-colonial people. But that is the way they are dismissed at the moment by the Soviet bloc and its supporters. . . .

ABOVE ALL, we are reaping what we have sown. This is not in any sense an attack on the present Minister, nor on the delegations which we have sent out there. They have been very small, but extremely impressive. However, we have treated the election of Mr M'Bow casually. We have allowed the situation in Paris to deteriorate until the staff has become frightened and is now of low calibre. We have not seized the political opportunities of replying to the constant torrent of Soviet propaganda by a sober recital of what they are really up to. . . .

"The modish idea that commercial contacts with the West are unhelpful or even damaging to the economic prospects of less developed countries serves as specious rationalisation for the restriction of these contacts. The idea that they are harmful has even led to proposals for large-scale severance of commercial ties between the less developed world and the West in the name of the collective self-reliance of developing countries. . . . Such ideas are often welcomed by Third World rulers because extensive restriction of the external commercial contacts of their citizens often serves their own interests."

Moreover, the abstract "truth to self" that defines Mr M'Bow's notions of economic policy is the recipe for continuing non-development. "In Asia, Africa and Latin America the level of material achievement declines as one moves away from the impact of Western contacts", Lord Bauer concludes.

"To say that commercial contacts inhibit economic advance is the opposite of the truth. This also reflects contempt for ordinary people by suggesting that they do not know what they are doing when they buy imports from the West, or produce for export to the West."⁴

How to explain the general support for the "New International Economic Order" among Third World governments and international civil servants? UNESCO's efforts fall on fallow ground. In the first place, there is a genuine ideological mistrust that the market works to improve the plight of people. More plausibly, I suspect one has to recognise the fact that a free market offers fewer personal benefits for the political class than régimes of bureaucratic collectivism. It should, but perhaps no longer does, go without saying that centrally-organised economies serve to enrich no one, except the cliques of central planners.

There are signs here too of the general revolt against statism. People vote, with their feet if necessary, for the opportunity to work, to prosper, to profit from "the sweat of their brow", for economic liberties (has anyone from Hong Kong ever asked for asylum in Communist China?). Whose argument, then, appears more likely to benefit the peoples of the underdeveloped world—Mr M'Bow's no-growth-is-beautiful, or Professor Bauer's argument for individualised economic freedom?

A life-and-death question for half the world, and doubtless worthy of cultural debate and educational discussion, but this is not a question destined to become a topic for a UNESCO colloquium. Even if social scientists in favour of growth seem to be on the intellectual offensive, Third-World leaders choose not to pay attention. In his book, Professor Bauer also takes a well-aimed shot against the bow of élitarian ideologues who deny the right to prosperity by denying the economic perspicacity of their backward peoples. "Economic responsiveness does not depend on literacy or formal education", he writes. "Illiterate, uneducated people can readily recognise an extension of their opportunities, they can tell whether a change makes them better or worse off, and they can certainly tell the difference between more and less." But UNESCO knows best what ideas best serve education, science and culture.

⁴ P. T. Bauer, *Reality and Rhetoric*, pp. 21-22, 30.

2. "The Rights of Peoples"



DURING THIS SYMBOLIC year, dire warnings of Orwell's nightmarish world are, naturally enough, journalistic exaggerations. Not so at UNESCO, where the *lingua franca* is double-speak. The idea of individual human rights, incorporating the most ideal concern of liberal democra-

cies, gets the worst battering. This is not a surprising bit of intellectual targetry. The Western values that accord respect to "the individual" above all else appear to be naturally attractive to families everywhere, and so are anathema to convinced collectivists of all shades. Just as the "German Democratic Republic" and "People's Republic of China" re-define the political concepts of what a "people's democracy" and a "people's republic" essentially represent, UNESCO has managed to turn "human rights" into "people's rights."

Isaiah Berlin once made a brilliant distinction between "positive" and "negative" freedoms. Human rights help make the individual free by protecting the individual from constraints or compulsion, usually from the power of governments. "People's rights" is a concept that, conversely, means the freedom for governments to block human rights in the total interests of the state: "the right of solidarity", "the right to communicate", and "the right to cultural identity" are in fact designed, in the manner of a totalitarian constitution, to give all power to "the centre", to create a state system that is for the government, of the government, by the government.

The 1983-85 UNESCO plan in this area has two major parts. The first is called "the study of human rights in the context of the different cultural and religious traditions." The tactic here is to make what the West views as an absolute moral and political good—human rights—appear to be relative.

"Study will be carried out with a view to arriving at a better historical understanding of human rights and their different forms of expression in the most diverse cultures."

In an organisation where Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran has as much pull as any other country, the diplomatic tendency is to fudge and smudge. If one state argues that it's fine for the state to arrest without reason and use psychiatric institutions as prisons for non-believers, then this needs to be "better understood" in its expressiveness and diversity. If another state sends children of twelve to a war front and offers them religious-military martyrdom, must we not also recognise that different cultures cause different casualties? Soon someone at a seminar will offer a paragraph splitting "different forms of the expression of human rights" down the middle, and we will be well on the way to reaching a new global consensus.

The related area of study will deal with "problems connected with the rights of peoples and the historical and practical significance of these problems."

"In other words, special attention will be paid to the conception of human rights and the rights of peoples in various

cultural and religious traditions, considering on the one hand, fundamental human rights and examining on the other, the concept of the rights of peoples and the reciprocal relations between the two . . . laying emphasis on the quality of the rights of all peoples . . . and also on the right to education, culture, communication, development, etc.”

The hoped-for result of all this is the “circulation of a synthesis for the theoretical investigation of the relationships between human rights and the right of peoples.”⁵ What this actually means is: let’s see if we can’t water down the old-fashioned ideals of human rights into something a little more modern, by defining personal rights as governmental entitlements. The state must grow to care. Compassion is to be socialised.

ONE OF THE twenty senior officials who have left UNESCO since 1980—when Mr M’Bow was re-elected to a second seven-year term—was Pierre de Senarclens, the Director of the Human Rights Division. A Swiss academic, M. de Senarclens departed after three years on the job. He informed Mr M’Bow in his letter of resignation (a personal document which I have seen) that “one has the impression that it is no longer possible to have any form of discussion or intellectual debate.”⁶ He complained of “unnecessary politicisation”, and described how a M’Bow-appointed aide “frequently omitted to pass along copies of memos or letters concerning the division [and] systematically modified all my propositions without always keeping me informed of the changes. . . .” In the social sciences generally, there are

“flagrant inequalities between formal responsibilities and actual capacities, non-respect for specialisation . . . ambiguities in the lines of responsibility, multiplication and indeterminacy of criteria for evaluation of work, the proliferation of parallel hierarchies.”

In short, here are strange forms of academic Orwellism, or (if you will) studies out of the atmosphere of what Idi Amin’s secret police called “State Research.” Academic freedom, hard enough to protect consistently even in the West, was an early and easy victim of Mr M’Bow’s new ways. Things became so bizarre, in fact, that M. de Senarclens, putting things very discreetly, concluded that he “even had the feeling of recognising in a microcosm certain perversions of human and social relations that had, as a reaction, led to the creation of UNESCO.”

⁵ *Approved Programme*, p. 554.

⁶ Letter of Pierre de Senarclens, Director of the Human Rights Division, to Director-General M’Bow, Paris, 21 March 1983.

⁷ The phrase “truly objective” is the work of an ingenious disinformant. Consider its use by Alexander Filipopoulos, editor of Greece’s pro-Soviet, anti-Western *Ethnos* newspaper, in a 1983 trial in Athens in which *Ethnos* was accused of being set up in 1981 by the KGB. Filipopoulos said his paper, far from being part of the Soviet disinformation campaign, was designed to be “profoundly anti-imperialistic, profoundly democratic, free, truly objective.” (Gordon Crovitz, “Pericles, Greece Needs You Back”, *The Wall Street Journal*, 19 June 1984.)

3. “New World Information Order”



LOOKING BACK, Mr M’Bow must surely feel he erred when he committed UNESCO to creating a “new world information and communication order.” This alerted the Western press to a present threat to its professional livelihood, and caused a guaranteed five-year conflict

which saw the West united for once on a principle of cultural freedom. The UNESCO programme is now widely understood for what it in fact always was: an attempt to legitimate censorship, to establish licensing for journalists, and to command access in the Western media on behalf of Third-World governments. One result was that even *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, flagships of the American centre-left, urged editorially in 1983 that the USA pull out of UNESCO. The envisioned “information order” no doubt suddenly made the general direction of the organisation’s ideological thrust abundantly clear. Mr M’Bow might well have been more prudent, or even devious.

In 1974, the Soviets had introduced a resolution that defined the area of desirable debate on what they imagine to be “the Free Press.” They called for a “declaration on fundamental principles governing the use of the mass media in strengthening peace and international understanding and in combating war propaganda, racism and apartheid.” The means to “govern” such use are, of course, already at the disposal of Communist régimes; so the next step must be to guarantee such mass-media usage to other comradely censors and authoritarians. These include

“regulation of the right to information by preventing abusive uses of the right of access to information . . . definition of appropriate criteria to govern truly objective⁷ news selection . . . regulation of the collection, processing and transmission of news and data across national frontiers.”

The current programme to achieve these goals is entitled, grandiloquently, “Communication in the Service of Man.” Jean Gerard, the outspoken US Ambassador to UNESCO, has instead called it “Communication in the Service of the State.” Over the next several years, according to the 1983-85 programme, “studies will be carried out on the philosophical and legal foundations on which the ‘right to communicate’, might rest.” First-World thinkers like Montesquieu and Jefferson have had their go at defending the free press, so, according to UNESCO mandarins, it’s naturally time for a balance-obsessed organisation to fund arguments in favour of Third-World censorship. One important concept frequently repeated in UNESCO writing on this subject is the easily-loaded phrase “rights and responsibilities of communicators.” Between the right and the responsibility falls the blue pencil.

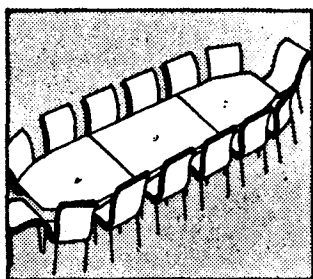
Legitimising the controlled press is, of course, child’s play for skilled ideologists. New values, diversely expressed and “historically understood”, gain their legitimacy simply because a majority of UNESCO member countries flaunt them and put

them vigorously into practice. Things are legitimate because they're there. One heretical UNESCO official has referred to it as "The ramming of the positive down the throat of the normative." For example, the way UNESCO plans to establish the "right to communicate" is by an examination of

"the current situation in different countries as regards the rights and responsibilities of communicators under different legal and socio-economic systems."

In this absolutely relative view of the function of the press versus the government when it comes to news, it is impossible to uncover any principle, high or low. Budget priorities under this programme area, for example, call for spending \$56,000 for the "rehabilitation" of the Ugandan government printing department in Entebbe.⁸

4. Tammany-sur-Seine



IDEOLOGICAL tergiversations are matched by managerial waywardness. UNESCO was designed as a kind of mini-university; and who was so pragmatic as to think of laying down any system of checks-and-balances or external oversight by the UN? As a result, the Director-

General has extraordinary powers. He rules through an executive board, which meets infrequently. Patronage, secretiveness, and even graft are widely prevalent, according to Western diplomats. Owen Harries, formerly Australia's Ambassador to UNESCO, described the system:

"With an assured majority behind him; with enormous patronage to dispense in the form of well-paying jobs, grants to governments and agencies, travel to conferences in glamorous cities, membership in innumerable study groups; with a large and intimidated Secretariat to carry out his commands, Mr M'Bow is indisputedly the boss in UNESCO."⁹

The General Accounting Office (GAO) of the US Congress has just completed an audit of the UNESCO books. Its investigators have been looking into charges of the most serious cases of abuse. For example, 25 million dollars were budgeted in 1982 to fill 322 professional-level positions. These positions remain unfilled; but the Western delegations have been unable to discover where the money has gone. Many suspect it to be the source of funding for dozens of short-term patronage employees; but Mr M'Bow isn't saying. This secretiveness was a particularly sensitive point in a March 1984 memorandum to Mr M'Bow from the 24 Western countries. "An unknown number of outside consultants have been hired, partly to do the

work which falls under the vacant posts", complained the bill-paying governments. "Undoubtedly in many cases their use is beneficial, but information on their numbers and on the number and duration of their missions should be available to member states."¹⁰ There has been no response from Mr M'Bow.

The British government has been especially concerned to highlight these managerial shortcomings. In a letter to Mr M'Bow from Timothy Raison MP, Minister for Overseas Development (5 April 1984), Mr Raison concluded there must be "radical improvements in UNESCO's programmes and procedures" if Britain is to remain a member. These include a review of the major programmes to identify inappropriate areas, a restructuring of the secretive Office of Public Information, and increased oversight of the Director-General's prerogatives. There must be "clear, concise and precise statements of objectives, specific targets to be achieved, the use of qualitative and quantitative indicators, and the increased use, on a selective basis, of independent external evaluation."

The most embarrassing evidence about the organisation may be what the people who work there think, and openly say, about how it's run. A 1983 poll of employees, including many hired by the Director-General, indicated that only 3% of the employees think that "well-qualified" people are recruited and that promotions are based on "merit." The US State Department notes that only one American was hired last year out of 128 recommendations for positions. The staff is loyal to Mr M'Bow to the point of closing bureaucratic ranks round the most dubious kinds of behaviour. A penthouse apartment was created for him and his family in the top two floors of the Paris headquarters. According to Charles Hummel, the Swiss Ambassador (and then chairman of the "Headquarters committee"), the agreement was that Mr M'Bow would pay rent on the space, as do other UN chiefs in official residencies. But when a rent was requested, a Mr M'Bow staff-man announced that this was "*une question très indiscrette*": and the matter was dropped.

The March 1984 fire at the Paris headquarters is widely assumed to be the work of employees who would have preferred that certain damning records and files go up in smoke. Even the staid *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* gave its news story on the event the headline "FIREGATE." Local French investigators haven't found the arsonists, though they suspect an "inside job." The fires were started in the Records Room, and a few other places where budget and accounting documents are stored. It is not exactly unknown in the Third World for records offices to be destroyed under mysterious conditions just on the eve of investigations.

QUITE APART FROM OLD-FASHIONED CORRUPTION, it is clear that the UNESCO budget is not so much designed to serve the specific interests of education, science and culture as to cater to the bureaucratic needs of the organisation itself. Under the 1983-85 budget, three-quarters of the \$374 million budget will be spent at the headquarters in Paris. Half the total goes to pay salaries, expenses, and other emoluments

⁸ *Approved Budget*, pp. 90-91, 128.

⁹ Owen Harries, "The USA and UNESCO at a Crossroads" and "GAO's UNESCO Report Card: a Failing Grade", The Heritage Foundation, (Backgrounder, Washington), 19 October 1983 and 8 October 1984.

¹⁰ "The Crisis in UNESCO", 14 March 1984.

of Paris staff. Only a tenth of the budget will be spent "in the field", where one would have imagined that actual contributions to science, culture and education might usefully be made. Conferences are a major cost: more than 200 are planned (half of them nicely situated in Paris). It is easy to get their flavour from such titles as:

"Seminar on the ethical responsibilities of scientists in support of disarmament and peace" (20 participants for five days).

"Meeting of experts to draw up a plan for the promotion of Creole languages as languages of tuition and as a factor in the assertion of cultural identity" (10 participants for three days).

"International training seminar on the impact of the activities of transnational corporations" (20 participants for five days).

The conferences typify the new, heavily ideologised, UNESCO. The much-publicised conference on "World Culture" in Mexico City in 1983, for example, produced French Minister Jack Lang's notorious peroration against "US cultural imperialism." But, according to Owen Harries, this was a fairly typical UNESCO conference: "... characterised by organisational chaos, contempt for proper procedures and blatant manipulation ... deadlines for the acceptance of resolutions ignored; a failure to distribute translations of key documents", etc. Even the organisation's own general conference, during which programmes and budgets are agreed, is run with tyrannical dispatch. After the USA had announced it would not agree to an increase in any UN agency budget, Mr M'Bow told the conference, staring and pointing at the American Ambassador, Jean Gerard: "All delegations, and I mean all, in the interests of consensus" must support a budget increase.

There is a political aspect to the managerial morass. When President François Mitterrand expelled 47 KGB officers in Spring 1982, it turned out that twelve of them "worked" at UNESCO. Nine were members of the Soviet delegation, and three were on Mr M'Bow's own secretariat staff.

This was, perhaps, not surprising. Richard Hoggart, the distinguished English writer and academic who served for five years as Assistant Director-General, notes that the notion of a "neutral" civil service is, like the UN itself, a naive Western idea.

"The Soviets do find it almost impossible to believe that a member of the Secretariat is not also a member of his national civil service ... it follows that almost all staff members from Communist countries and many from others, are ideologically wholly reliable."¹¹

What is particularly shocking is that even now Mr M'Bow has not taken his three full-time employees and part-time spies off the UNESCO payroll. It is most generous of the West, which pays

three-quarters of the budget, also to defray the cost of an extra handful of KGB agents.

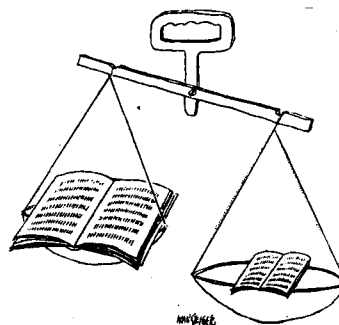
Moreover, the wilful failure to control the budget reflects the ideological tic of the anti-Western members. The USA, which pays a quarter of the budget, was in effect challenged to make good on its threat to leave. Past diplomatic history made it a fair bet that it wouldn't, and that instead the West would mutter and grumble and continue to pay UNESCO's way. It is, in the end, hardly surprising that the organisation's leadership would act irresponsibly with someone else's money. In the prevailing "North-South" orthodoxy, Western funding is, after all, an entitlement.

Given this spirit, one must really confirm that the essential disorientations of UNESCO began long before the presence of the high-pressure Soviet elements. After all the USSR only joined in April 1954, at which point UNESCO's then Director-General Dr Luther Evans (a former Librarian of Congress) welcomed the Russians to "the UNESCO family." One American student of UNESCO's history has sharply recorded the atmosphere of this early period:

"... the then Western majority constantly bent over backwards to avoid any possible charge of ethnocentrism. The non-Western world in those days was perceived to be excitingly 'multiracial' and 'ethnic' and (worst of all) 'colorful' (the lady in the pineapple dress). Embedded in the mentality of the UNESCO founders was the attitude: we may have the experts and the technology, but at some deeper, more profound level, you have the spiritual awareness and the intuition, the Roots and the Cultural Values. We have more to learn from you than you from us, when all is said and done. Yes, we have the cranes and the know-how to lift heavy stones, but *you* have the temples that are worth saving.

And of course the more 'we' took this attitude, the more we were accused of being smug, self-satisfied, and condescending. Perhaps most important, the Third World soon caught on to what really underlay this attitude of Let-Us-Polish-Up-Your-Buddhas (and foot the bill): weakness, self-doubt, uncertainty, loss of faith, loss of nerve. The Soviet Union noticed it, too. For some reason they hadn't caught the disease. . . ."¹²

5. The Counter-Offensive



Mr M'Bow's Paris establishment. It could probably stumble

¹¹ Richard Hoggart, *An Idea and Its Servants*, cited by Chester F. Finn, Jr, "How to Lose the War of Ideas", *Commentary* (August 1983), p. 47.

¹² Tom Bethell, "The Lost Civilisation of Unesco", *Policy Review* (Spring 1983), pp. 19-47.

along in its own way even without the tens of millions which come from appropriations in Washington, London, Bonn, etc. Still, without the prestige of Western legitimacy, it might well go into decline, with both the Communist "Second World" and the Afro-Asian "Third World" seeking other instruments to serve their special interests.

In some obvious panic and disarray, the M'Bow establishment has tried to rally to the defence of the *status quo*, even if all kinds of painful concessions have to be hastily made, and some substantial funds sacrificed. To lose the thirty million dollars which the USA contributes year after year would be the worst thing that could happen; yet, to cut the raisin-filled budget by even 29 million would still put Paris ahead. As a result Mr M'Bow has been very busy with a rescue operation. Only recently he conceded that some 80 million dollars should be returned to the Euro-American contributors out of the special reserve fund which was intended to ensure against possible currency-exchange losses. Most of the "ideological" programmes have been put into cold storage. The various "national committees" which are supposed to do wholesome publicity for UNESCO were quickly activated to testify how—on balance and in general, taking all things together, and overlooking a few inevitable misdemeanours—UNESCO has been doing a useful, worthwhile, progressive, inimitable job for the entire world.

The desperation to save what could be saved knew no bounds. In August it was discovered that UNESCO had engaged a Washington public relations firm in an effort to improve its poor image in America. Under a contract signed on 1 July (reported the *Daily Telegraph* in London, 18 August) the Washington firm of Wagner & Baroody will be paid an estimated \$15,000 monthly (£11,000) from a special UNESCO fund. For its fee it would distribute a "White Paper" on the subject under fire, going out to media and policy-makers. It would also set up speaking engagements and arrange for TV

interviews. It is not clear whether these fees will come from that total of 80 million dollars surplus (60 million pounds) accumulated by UNESCO in the special account to offset exchange-rate fluctuations. The GAO accountants may have been beaten to the books by the fire-raisers in Paris.¹³

IN ANY EVENT it is doubtful whether the PR men with their glossy image-making will be any more impressive than those estimable *grands amis d'UNESCO* who have been mobilised this year to give testimony. Consider the report issued this summer by the executive committee of the United States National Commission for UNESCO.

The case against the record of UNESCO is not contradicted, but the Commission thinks that serious reforms are both needed and possible, and that withdrawal would be counter-productive. It denies that it is a committee of "glowingly supportive" apologists; it wants to keep a strong Western presence in an established international institution that would otherwise be completely dominated by illiberal authoritarian ideals. The Commissioners are constantly emphasising the importance of a "Western voice" (or, as national style would have it, an "American voice, defending US interests") in this "great forum of world opinion."

This is the sheerest balderdash. Most of those UNESCO speeches by second-rate political appointees over almost four decades have been interminably boring, delivered from non-texts by non-orators, and then distributed in unreadable mimeographed press releases to stultified reporters who have promptly consigned them to the nearest waste-paper basket.

At its best the Commission's "advisory" is a case for counter-reform rather than counter-revolution; at its worst it is a specious, self-serving piece of semi-official propaganda. Thus, it blandly accepts all the empty rhetoric of governmental reports which never, in the last analysis, find anything to recommend but more of the same—at a slightly increased budget. Given the Huxleyan history of UNESCO, all this is usually dressed up in a "cultural" garb which makes a mockery of the educational ideals it professes to serve. Here is a typical paragraph of official hogwash:

"My report from Paris, is, in a word, positive. . . . I would like to quote one phrase from Luther Evans that conveys a lot of what I myself feel about [UNESCO]—'UNESCO is more than an institution, it is a work of art still being thought out and worked on, therefore fascinating by reason of its very incompleteness and its unresolved "enigmas"'. . . ."¹⁴

Special pleading is usually characterised by limitless hypocrisy tempered with vague rhetoric; and the UNESCO controversy is ideally suited to this mix. The Smithsonian Institution, a serious and important body which should know better, testifies:

"It [UNESCO] replaces informal structures destroyed forever by the modern world."

If the Smithsonian believes that, it will believe anything, which its fellow-testifiers obviously do. The US friends quote a Soviet foreign affairs journal to the effect:

¹³ Some years ago the USA conducted an extensive study of UNESCO plans and budgets. In its report of 14 September 1979 (entitled *UNESCO Programming and Budgeting Needs Greater US Attention*), the US General Account Office (GAO)—a much-feared Washington body—came, before its current burst of realism, to some extraordinary conclusions. The assessment of the Comptroller General of the US was that:

"Although UNESCO activities were not studied in detail during that review, we regarded the management procedures to be unique and forward-looking. . . . UNESCO planning and budgeting processes are conceptually sound. . . ."

If you don't know what they're doing, or why, how can you know that the way they're doing it is so good, so sound, so "forward-looking"?

The Americans also called in the United Kingdom Comptroller and Auditor General, "neither of whom have questioned UNESCO procedures of management." They wouldn't, would they? (After dispensing several hundred thousand pounds of British taxpayers' money to his Northern Ireland automobile plant, they even believed—until it was too late in the day—John De Lorean to be sound and forward-looking.)

One aghast US Congressman told me, after he'd read the 1984 GAO report that if UNESCO was a US organisation "this matter would go straight to the Justice Department."

¹⁴ "What are the Issues Concerning the Decision of the United States to Withdraw from UNESCO?", An Advisory [Report] from the US National Commission for UNESCO (New York, 1984), p. 5.

"The useful work done by UNESCO is well known and much valued in the Soviet Union. . . ." (p. 14)

The US Commission's boundless reserves of nice, friendly goodwill are never troubled by a doubt or sceptical suspicion:

"UNESCO's work in the field of peace research¹⁵ and arms control and disarmament education has been of significant value to American researchers and teachers, according to the consortium of Peace Research Education and Development." (p. 15)

Furthermore, it is typical of advocates of multimillion dollar or pound (or D-mark) institutions to take a supercilious view of small grants amounting "merely" to a few hundred thousand here and there. They are untroubled by the support for "PLO fellowships", amounting to only \$350,000 a year. ("Few would contend that helping to educate Palestinian children contributes to terrorism.") And they are equally indifferent to the propagandistic consequences of the whole campaign on behalf of "New Orders", either informational or economic. The Americans are pleased that the (erstwhile Nazi) term is not of Soviet, but of African, origin. The Germans, according to their Vice-President of the West German Commission for UNESCO, Herr Walter Mertineit, acknowledge the "weakness of the idea", but, after all, it only "occasionally leads its proponents to aggressive rhetoric and unrealistic draft resolutions. . ." (*Die Zeit*, 1 June 1984).

Somewhat more substantial, if with the same touch of tendentiousness, is the argument on behalf of the constructive oceanographic, anthropological, meteorological and other technical scientific services which UNESCO has managed to monopolise for itself in the post-War period and which have in the main (if expensively) made useful contributions. But the thesis is absurd that only this top-heavy and seriously flawed organisation could collate such data. What needs to be said is that whatever sound projects the UNESCO bureaucracy undertakes should, from the very beginning, have been liberated from the heavy paws of governments and put into the hands of international professional bodies—associations of the educators, the scientists, the authors, the academics. The "Education, Science, & Culture" of the UNESCO brief should have been the province of private organisations, internationally connected, generously endowed, and safely beyond governmental interference or statist rationalisations. In the event that weather data were found to be lagging in East Africa, or reports from the sub-continent on ocean currents to be tardy, the American or British or West German Ambassador could be called upon to put in an influential word. To think that Mr M'Bow's Paris Committee of 161, more occupied with the number of stars in their *Michelin* than with anything dreamt of in Dr Julian Huxley's philosophy, is

sacrosanct and indispensable, is surely a paltry failure of the imagination.

THE MOST INCISIVE and sophisticated defence of the future of a reformed UNESCO has been mounted by Freedom House in New York, and the testimony of its executive director, Mr Leonard Sussman, deserves to be treated seriously.¹⁶

At bottom the issue, as I have suggested already, is one of "reform or revolution", of medication versus surgery, of piecemeal amelioration or fundamental structural change. The "moderate" position calls on the West to reassert its influence through the existing UNESCO forum, but it fails to confront the fact that the best the West has done up till now is for the moment to stop "censorship" and "information control" from becoming official dogma; it has not risen, and indeed never can (given the governmental structure), to the defence of extending the principles of press freedom, civil liberties, and humanist tolerant values into those dark areas of the world controlled by authoritarians and totalitarians. The tyrannous ideologues are not only more dedicated to defending their own vital interests but are also more ingenious in coining catch-phrases and agit-prop slogans. Thus, the Freedom House defence includes a rationalisation that the deceitful notion of "people's rights" should really be accepted by the West as an "integral part of its own democratic tradition" rather than a Machiavellian trick of dictators and their paid propagandists to get around the embarrassing issue of "human rights."

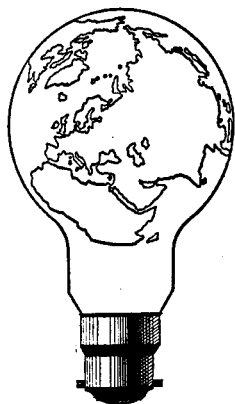
If "self-determination" is what is meant, then it should be so said; condoning obfuscation is meritless. This kind of compromise with cant is particularly unfortunate in this Orwellian year of 1984, for it was George Orwell who especially underscored the importance of language in the political struggle. To argue that "ambiguity can cut both ways" is to sell the linguistic pass. One might as well argue that, in the absence of precise definition, one should make common cause with such untenable concepts as "the dictatorship of the proletariat" (after all, aren't we all workers?) and "people's democracy" (a bit tautological, but surely we can't have enough of popular liberty?). . . .

IN THE END the issue is one of Western will and imagination. If "rejectionism" is simply reacting against UNESCO corruption, bureaucratic as well as intellectual, and in an isolationist mood being keen to "opt out", then the withdrawal will be unproductive. If the Western nations, led by the Americans, the British, and the West Germans, decide to return "Education, Science, and Culture" to the private sphere—albeit with occasional and decisive governmental support, diplomatic as well as financial—then the next ten or twenty years might see for the first time since the illusions of Franklin Roosevelt and his poet-laureate of UNESCO, Archibald MacLeish, a serious step forward towards building an international network of non-governmental institutions which could support, defend, and possibly even extend the ideals of sorely-beset, free, liberal, and humane societies.

¹⁵ For a critical analysis of the whole heavily ideologised notion of "peace research", see the debunking brochure of the same title, written by Roger Scruton and Caroline Cox, published in London by the Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies, 13-14 Golden Square, London W.1., £2.50.

¹⁶ See his article and documentation in *Freedom at Issue* (New York, July-August 1984), "UNESCO: Up Against the US Ultimatum", pp. 21-31.

6. What Do We Do Now?



WHAT THE WEST does about UNESCO of course depends on what purpose we think UNESCO is now serving. It certainly doesn't contribute to "the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind" as its founding preamble hoped it would. In fact, it is hard to think of another organisation that suggests so starkly that there is no such solidarity and makes its own contribution to world divisiveness.

Are there any grounds for continued participation? The eleven-page memorandum "The Crisis in

UNESCO", written by representatives of the 24 Western countries, including the USA, answers: probably not. The only hope would be if

"all parties concerned would adopt an attitude in consonance with UNESCO's basic aims, which presupposes a will to really dialogue with each other for better mutual understanding and not from an ideological point of view . . . this lofty goal will be difficult to reach, if it can be reached at all, but the least one could expect would be self-restraint in politicising issues."

But the group acknowledged that this just isn't going to happen (even if "to really dialogue" is not exactly the proper phrase for a high Western desideratum).

"Fundamental concepts and ideals which the founding fathers of UNESCO put at its basis, and which reflected the liberal philosophies of the 'Enlightenment' (*Aufklärung*), are now adhered to by only a rather small minority of member states."

Why? The "lure of ideology."

"The combination of these two developments have placed Western values on the defensive and have led at the same time to a 'semantic sliding', which has become particularly conspicuous in UNESCOese."

Dialogue and negotiation are still widely and touchingly considered to be the sophisticated way to deal with those who believe in monologue and non-negotiable demands. But "jaw-jaw" is obviously damaging the Western case; especially when propaganda cadres are actually engaged in ideological "war-war." The target of the West's enemies throughout the United Nations system is the language in which democracies express and defend their values. Liberty, democracy, justice, a free press—all clearly mean different things to totalitarians, and we err grievously when we allow our language to be reshaped to fit their concepts. If we believe that ideas count, we must know that they are too important to leave to job-sensitive consensus-seekers in international bureaucracies.

Only the innocent and inexperienced will be able to persuade themselves that the "tactical concessions" now being made by the Third-World hard-core on the UNESCO front will put paid to the general ideological offensive on behalf of censorship and a

controlled press (among other totalitarian aspirations). Mr M'Bow's appeasement of Western criticism is cosmetic. What cannot be accomplished, for the moment, in UNESCO will be pushed forward elsewhere. So long as the West has only a "defensive" posture, resisting here and vetoing there and never standing up clearly and consistently, then the next twenty years will be sadly like the last. As *The Times* (London, 15 August) reported from New York:

"Third World countries are moving to secure the passage in the UN General Assembly of their controversial proposals for a system of international controls on the free flow of information after the outcry by Western representatives at UNESCO."

While the prospect of American withdrawal had a calming effect on UNESCO's most recent debate in December and the review of membership by Britain and other Western governments has stirred into motion an introspective search of areas ripe for reform, the West does not have much leverage in the General Assembly. There the US has reserved its withdrawal threats for Arab attempts to suspend Israel."

For the totalitarians, thinking tactically, it makes little principled difference on which front one fights for the militant cause, the UN or UNESCO (or wherever). For the confused Western liberal, thinking budgetarily, he is somehow comforted by the fact that "the American people contribute over \$1.4 billion annually toward the UN budget [but] less than 3% of that goes to UNESCO. . . ."

In any event, the UNESCO budget will be contracting, and its performance even more, since (as Rosemary Righter reported in *The Sunday Times*) "a third of its programmes duplicate each other at a cost of \$11m. . . ." Yet the best the West could emerge with from the late October meeting of UNESCO's 51-member executive was a commitment to "no increase in the budget" and "no real growth." The Eastern bloc and the Third-World countries had wanted to plan for an expansion of at least 2% in 1986-87. Instead (as a Reuter's dispatch from Paris put it), "they accepted a compromise text that left open the possibility of additional spending. . ." (*International Herald Tribune*, 4 October). Numeracy here is evidently more important than literacy.

IS THE RECORD all bad? Paradoxically, UNESCO has perhaps met one of the goals of its charter—for it *has* contributed to international understanding. The scales of disbelieving naivety should by now have fallen from Western eyes. There is no excuse any longer for us to suspend judgment about the nature of the preponderance of governments belonging to the "one-nation, one-vote" United Nations system. They do not share our values, in large part because these values are not in the interests of autocratic rulers. Continued participation in UNESCO by the West would, in the next decade, only contribute to the further propping-up of corrupt and corrupting régimes. Most importantly, we would continue to depreciate our most fundamental political and moral ideals by condoning a systematic and subsidised campaign of specious attacks against them.

Was Hitler a Marxist?

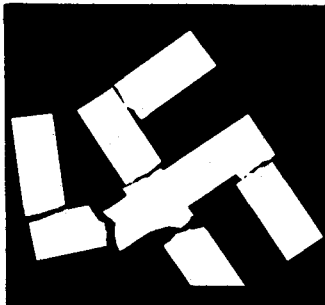
Reflections about certain Affinities

"One fire drives out one fire; one nail, one nail."

SHAKESPEARE, *Coriolanus*

"Hitler's radical Fascism can only be understood in its connections with Bolshevism and Marxism."

PROFESSOR ERNST NOLTE, *FAZ* (21 July 1984)



IN MAY 1913 a 24-year old Austrian stepped off the Vienna train in Munich, and sniffed its air with delight. "A German city", he called it ten years later, in *Mein Kampf*. He had come to Germany to paint. But when the young Adolf Hitler was not painting, or sleeping, he was reading voraciously in

books borrowed from Munich libraries—among them the writings of another revolutionary thinker, Karl Marx. That bout of study lasted for over a year, down to the outbreak of war in August 1914, when Hitler joined the German army to fight. "A doctrine of destruction", he calls Marxism in his autobiography, in a remark not entirely depreciatory, perhaps, coming as it does from someone who all his life saw himself as an apostle of destruction. And he read around it as well as in it:

¹ Heinz A. Heinz, *Germany's Hitler* (London, 1934), p. 58, a Nazi propaganda biography designed for foreign readers and published only (so far as I have discovered) in English and Polish.

The best general account of Hitler's intellectual sources is H. R. Trevor-Roper, "The Mind of Adolf Hitler" in *Hitler's Table Talk 1941-4* (London, 1953, rev. 1973), which mentions Marxism only in passing (p. xxxv), however, though it usefully confirms the probable authenticity of Rauschning's *Hitler Speaks* (London, 1939).

Friedrich Heer, *Der Glaube des Adolf Hitler* (Munich, 1968), dismisses any suggestion that Hitler had so much as read the chief writings of Marxism, let alone studied them (p. 121), on the tenuous ground that he misquotes Marx's famous dictum about religion as an opiate for the people. But mistakes like that are easily compatible with avid, careless reading, which is what *Mein Kampf* suggests. And recently Peter R. Black, *Ernst Kaltenbrunner* (Princeton, 1984), a well-documented life of another Austrian Nazi, has shown in its first chapter, "The Austrian Roots of Ideological Commitment", how far removed from any Catholic tradition of anti-Semitism the ideas of pan-Germanists like Schönerer were in the 1880s and 1890s, and makes any merely traditionalist interpretation of Hitler's views harder to sustain.

"I immersed myself in the theoretical literature of this new world, trying to be clear about its possible effects."

His Munich landlord, Herr Popp, and his wife later reported how in 1913-14 "the Austrian charmer" (as they called him) would politely decline to share their meal downstairs—obstinately climbing to his room with a pile of books under one arm, and sausage and bread under the other. He lived like a hermit for days on end, Frau Popp later said, with his nose stuck in heavy books, and "you couldn't tell what he was thinking." And when she asked him why he bothered, he would reply evasively: "Dear Frau Popp, does one ever know what is, and isn't, likely to be useful in life?"¹

I want to argue that Hitler did find Marxism useful in life, even indispensable, and that recent historians of Nazism have failed as utterly as his landlady to tell what he was thinking. And they have failed because, like Frau Popp when she saw those books under his arm, they have missed the evidence under their noses. They have missed Hitler's Marxism.

1. "Racial Trash"

HITLER'S EVENTUAL DEBT to the Soviet Union, as a technical model for racial extermination, has already been argued. Several years ago ("Rehearsal for the Holocaust?", *Commentary*, June 1981) I suggested that the Nazi exterminations of 1941-45 may have been directly inspired by Stalin's Russia, which by then had a good twenty years of exterminating experience. Hard as Soviet evidence is to collect, Communist extermination beyond doubt came first; and it is likely enough that the Nazis borrowed from it after 1941. After all, they had been allies of the Russians by then for two years.

The article had a mixed, even a stormy reception. That demonstrated something, at least: that the scriptures of socialism are not much read nowadays, outside a few familiar quotations. Marx and Engels are the sort of authors that people imagine they already know. Very few socialists today, and surprisingly few of their opponents, have troubled to study the 19th-century pioneers carefully, or to reach out into the darker corners of their minds. There is occasional entertainment to be had here. In the 1970s, for example, the Italian Catholics amused themselves, and embarrassed their Communist ad-

versaries, by quoting a diatribe by Marx against divorce on their referendum posters, and the astonishment of Italian Communists was comical to behold: it had not even occurred to them that their ideological hero might be a committed conservative in family matters, slightly to the right of the Pope. Even dedicated anti-socialists are inclined to assume that in intention, at least, socialism is a humane and emancipated doctrine, however deficient in practice. It is imagined to be high-mindedly unrealistic, at worst. The name has a halo, and haloes dazzle. This article, which is about the socialist commitment to racial extermination and Hitler's debt to it, is designed to switch that halo off.

IT IS NO LONGER WIDELY KNOWN that Marx, Engels and some of their socialist successors believed in genocide, declared that belief, and held it because they were socialists.

There is a quick test of socialist literacy. Ask a Marxist friend if he accepts the view of Marx and Engels that social progress demands racial extermination. For myself, I have never met with anything here but a blank stare of astonishment or an indignant demand for evidence. Since the 1930s we have convinced ourselves that Fascists believe in race war and Marxists in class war; and we are wrong. Marx and Engels publicly declared that whole nations as well as whole classes would have to be exterminated. And that, they proclaimed, was essential to any advanced doctrine of scientific socialism.²

In January-February 1849, Friedrich Engels published an article on the Hungarian crisis in Marx's journal, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, calling for the extermination of whole races in Europe. "*Der magyarische Kampf*" has been collected more than once, even in East European editions of Marx and Engels, and its authenticity is not in question. For a young man using Munich libraries in 1913-14, the most available text is likely to have been in Franz Mehring's *Aus dem literarischen Nachlass von Marx, Engels und Lassalle* (where the Stuttgart title-page reads "1902"). It was reprinted in 1913, the year Hitler settled in Germany. The Staatsbibliothek in Munich, which was a lending library before the First World War, records that the first edition was acquired in October 1901.

It is sometimes thought that the 1849 Marx-Engels programme for racial extermination dropped out of sight in modern socialist debate, a forgotten morsel. It may be forgotten now by political scientists, perhaps out of embarrassment; it was not forgotten in the early decades of this century. Stalin alluded to it approvingly in *The Foundations of Leninism* (1924) some months after Lenin's death, when he was laying hands on power. His book was extensively read in the Soviet Union and promptly translated into German as

Lenin und der Leninismus (1924), appearing in Vienna during Hitler's confinement in Landsberg. Stalin's argument is frankly genocidal, and his warrant for genocide is the 1849 article. The Soviet state, Stalin argues, will have to destroy whole peoples who stand in the revolutionary path:

"In the forties of the last century, Marx supported the national movement of the Poles and Hungarians, and was opposed to the national movement of the Czechs and the South Slavs. Why? Because the Czechs and the South Slavs were then 'reactionary peoples', 'Russian outposts' in Europe, outposts of absolutism; whereas the Poles and the Hungarians were 'revolutionary peoples' fighting against absolutism."³

So the 1849 article was orthodox Marxism, in Soviet terms. We might have understood Stalin's policy on nationalities earlier, and more clearly, if closer attention had been paid at the start of his dictatorship to what he so publicly declared.

The socialist programme of nation-killing in 1849 had been German in its emphasis. Some nations are bearers of progress, Engels believed; others (mostly Slavs) are not. Being counter-revolutionary, they must "perish in the revolutionary holocaust" that he and Marx imagined in the 1840s to be imminent. Their reasoning was blunt. The socialist revolution will leave certain races two whole steps, at least, behind the vanguard of progress, and forever unable to catch up. Not even bourgeois in a bourgeois age, socialism will leave them so far in the rear as to be irreclaimable. They are "*Völkerabfall*", he argues—racial trash—and their fate is to disappear with the new socialist order. Genocide is progressive, in these terms: "... and that too is progress."

The Marx-Engels hit-list for historical progress was a curious one, and it had little to do with Jews. In fact Marx's famous essay on "The Jewish Question" can so easily be exculpated as a programme for extermination (though not as a programme for repression) that it may well have contributed to a glib neglect of other evidences of genocide in the Marx-Engels corpus. The races to be expunged are Scottish Highlanders who (as any reader of Scott's *Waverley* novels would know) were tainted with feudalism and Jacobitism; Bretons, who had supported royalism in the face of the French Revolution; Basques, who were backing the reactionary side in the struggle for the Spanish throne; and Yugoslavs (as we should call them now), who were helping to bring a reactionary Czarism deeper into Europe. Engels's language in 1849 is uncompromising:

"Until its complete extermination, or loss of national status, this racial trash always becomes the most fanatical bearer there is of counter-revolution, and it remains that. That is because its entire existence is nothing more than a protest against a great historical revolution."

A touch of *Mein Kampf*, even, in its rhetoric. And Hitler, if he ever read the article, may have relished Engels's concluding sentences most of all:

"The next world war will cause not only reactionary classes and dynasties, but also entire reactionary peoples, to disappear from the earth. And that too is progress."

After 1859, when Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared, the notion of a racial Survival of the Fittest rapidly

² See also my "Race and the Socialists: On the Progressive Principle of Revolutionary Extermination", *ENCOUNTER*, November 1976, reprinted in my *Politics and Literature in Modern Britain* (London, 1977). Paul Johnson's "Marxism vs. the Jews", *Commentary*, April 1984, is a recent account of Marxist anti-Semitism.

³ Stalin, *Works* (Moscow, 1953), vol VI, pp. 147 f.

became associated with his name—unjustly, since Darwin, who was never a socialist, nowhere supported that political interpretation. But for Marx, Darwin's book was "the scientific foundation of the historical class war", as he put it exuberantly to Lassalle; and he was to retain his enthusiasm for an historical model of a Nature red-in-tooth-and-claw till the end of his life in 1883. Scribbled in the years shortly before his death, his late notes on race have only recently been edited from manuscript as *Ethnological Notebooks* (1972)—an untidy book that confirms his abiding belief in tidy ethnic solutions. Engels was to survive Marx by a dozen years, to continue the long tradition of socialist racialism in his writings on kinship, and inserting elements into late editions of *Das Kapital*.

MODERN SOCIALISTS ARE INCLINED to be at least a trifle embarrassed by revelations of this sort: to murmur that they know nothing of such matters; that for all they know most Victorian thinkers held racist views of one kind or another; and that in any case genocide has nothing to do with the high-minded traditions of socialism in the advanced Western world in the 20th century.

The plea of ignorance, at least, one may unreservedly accept. It is highly unusual to meet a socialist who has read far into the collected writings of Marx and Engels, and in a busy political life there are doubtless better things to do. At a stretch, Marx and Engels are boring authors. But intellectuals do not have that excuse: they are supposed to have read a book before proclaiming a view of it, and they are not so lightly to be forgiven for bouts of dogmatic indolence. It is always rash to declare an allegiance to an author one has not read. And to imagine that one can know what Marx and Engels said by imbibing the warmed-up brew of commentators is to take a view as hopelessly easy as it is rash and perilous.

As for the suggestion that leaders of 19th-century political opinion were commonly racist, that is nothing more than a convenient fiction. Disraeli was, in a Semitic-mystical way; so was Carlyle, in a manner less amiable. But John Stuart Mill, who answered Carlyle in liberal style on the Negro question, was not (ENCOUNTER, November 1976), and there was absolutely no obligation in Victorian intellectual circles to hold some races genetically inferior to others. In Britain, at least, where Marx lived after 1849, I know of no evidence that either of the two great parties of state held what would now be called racist views—still less that they believed in genocide, on any ground whatever. Genocide, then, was not merely a fact of Victorian socialism: it was a characteristic fact. It helped to mark socialism off—and sharply—from its Liberal and Conservative adversaries.

To suppose that Marxist genocide has nothing much to do with English-speaking socialism is equally rash. H. G. Wells was an English Fabian who was never a Marxist, though he eventually supported the October Revolution on progressive grounds. But in 1902, in *Anticipations*, he demanded the extinction of what he called "swarms of black, and brown, and dirty-white, and yellow people who do not come into the new needs of efficiency. . . ." That applies Engels's grand principle of racial tidying-up across the whole

face of the globe—an imperial doctrine, by now, for an imperial age. The British Empire was never run on socialist lines, but Wells (p. 317) shows what the fate of blacks, browns, and dirty-whites might have been:

"The world is a world, not a charitable institution, and I take it they will have to go. The whole tenor and meaning of the world, as I see it, is that they will have to go."

He also advocated the painless killing of incurables, which is where Hitler's programme of extermination began in 1939. Wells's perfect future was a tight, white, right little world run by socialist technocrats.

A few years later Havelock Ellis, in *The Task of Social Hygiene* (1912), urged eugenics on a future socialist government as an unavoidable moral duty, to produce "fine individuals"; under socialism, he argued, quality will supplant quantity, that foolish fetish of capitalism. And by the 1930s, in *Soviet Communism* (1935), Sidney and Beatrice Webb were publicly praising the concentration camps of Stalin's Russia.

No wonder, then, if some socialists in Western Europe willingly suspended their hostility to Hitler's cause during the Nazi-Communist pact of 1939-41. Bertolt Brecht, for example: *Mutter Courage* opened in neutral Switzerland in April 1941, some months after France had fallen to Hitler. It is a Marxist play about the futility of war. A Zurich reviewer perceptively called it "zeitnah"—topical, concerned with the historical moment—which it was, being an attempt to persuade Britain and her supporters to accept defeat and lay down their arms. The French Communist Party, meanwhile, was actively collaborating with Vichy and the Nazi occupiers of France, on the grounds that Western Imperialism rather than Nazism was the international enemy of the working classes. Shortly after World War II had begun, J. B. S. Haldane wrote memorably in *The New Statesman*, on 30 September 1939:

"I would sooner be a Jew in Berlin than a Kaffir in Johannesburg or a Negro in French Equatorial Africa. If Czechs are treated as an inferior race, do Indians or Annamites enjoy complete equality?"

And by 1939, as if on cue, the Hitler who had recently allied himself to Communism was embarking on an act recommended by the socialist scriptures of the 19th century: the mass murder of whole races.

2. Selective Affinities

IN WHAT sense was Hitler a socialist? What was Hitler's probable knowledge of the socialist tradition of the 1840s, in favour of exterminating whole categories of mankind?

It is certain that Hitler had read widely in Marxist literature in Munich as a young man in 1913-14; it is also clear that he had read extensively during his enforced leisure in Landsberg prison in 1923-24, after his failed *putsch*. While Lenin lay dying in Russia, Hitler again took to a course of Marxist reading, though in the fresh knowledge that a revolutionary Marxist state had recently come to life on the face of the earth. Word

had been made flesh: October 1917 must have looked as mighty a revelation of the power of ideology as anything since 1789. In a cell in Landsberg prison, as Hitler tells in *Mein Kampf*, he read his Nietzsche and his Marx. "Landsberg was my college education", he would joke to his friends, "and at state expense"—and with the large advantage, he would add, of no pretentious professors to be endured. Lenin's death in January 1924 filled the prisoner with a rapturous sense that history was about to repeat itself, as indeed it was, and at home in his adopted Germany: his own movement now firmly set to replace a Slavic Communism which, like all things Slav, seemed to him weak, incompetent, and backward.

Hitler never called himself a Marxist in public. He came surprisingly close, however, to calling himself one in private, even after he seized power in January 1933. In the early biography by Konrad Heiden (1936-37), he is reported as finding Trotsky's memoirs nothing less than "brilliant" (I.355): an unexpected reaction from one who has passed into history as readily hostile to anything Communist. But the truth is that official Communism was objectionable to Hitler less because it was too radical than because it was too tame. "I have learnt a great deal from Marxism", he remarked to Hermann Rauschning just after he took power,

"as I do not hesitate to admit. . . . The difference . . . is that I have really put into practice what these peddlers and pen-pushers have timidly begun. The whole of National Socialism is based on it [p. 185]."

That is from the *Hitler Speaks* (1939) of Hermann Rauschning, a Bismarckian conservative who fled Germany in 1936 because he had come to believe, as an early Nazi, that the Hitler movement was secretly more radical than Bolshevism. The book presents a terrifying picture of National Socialism as a sort of non-theoretical Marxism where action has confidently supplanted the niceties of abstract speculation. The world belongs to those who do.

Stalin (as Hitler remarked in his table-talk at the height of his war against him, in July 1942) was "*ein genialer Kerl*"—nothing less than a genius in his own fashion—since he understood that deeds rather than theories count. Pen-pushers write pamphlets; the Nazi, by contrast, acts boldly according to the violent principles laid down in broad terms by great revolutionaries. He does not hesitate to act. No point, as Hitler explained to Rauschning in 1934, in wasting time on intellectual finesse. Nazism is a "revolutionary creative will that needs no ideological crutches"; and one that has no single or fixed aim, what is more, since history is a matter of "eternal change." That is why Marxists, he believed, make the best Nazis. At least they understand that politics by its very nature is a violent activity; and they only need to be shown that violence does not stop with a single revolution, as the Bolsheviks fondly imagine, but must go on and on:

"In my youth, and even in the first years of my Munich period after the war, I never shunned the company of Marxists [p. 186]."

That sounds as if the debt to revolutionary socialism was as much from conversation as from books—a conclusion altogether likely in an inherently lazy man with an avid taste for

crowds, and company, and face-to-face confrontations. The trouble was, Hitler added boastfully, that the Marxists he had known were such little men. But he could still work with them. Indeed he had already conceived of a Soviet alliance, Rauschning reports, as a "trump card" with which he would some day astonish the world. Germany and Russia were made for each other. "It is not Germany that will turn Bolshevik", he happily predicted to Rauschning in the spring of 1934, "but Bolshevism that will become a sort of National Socialism" (p. 134). The similarities, after all, had always been greater than the differences:

"There is more that binds us to Bolshevism than separates us from it. . . ."

and the *Führer* went on to explain that he had instructed his Party to admit former Communists at once. They were the right material:

"The petit bourgeois Social Democrat and the trade-union boss will never make a National Socialist, but the Communist always will."

ALL THAT IS ILLUMINATINGLY FRANK, and highly controversial: Rauschning's revelations of Hitler's private mind were considered indecorous, even incredible, when they were first made public late in 1939, whether on the Left or on the Right. If books are meant to make friends, *Hitler Speaks* could hardly have chosen a worse moment to appear. The Left had enough work on its hands explaining away the Hitler-Stalin Pact without the discovery that Hitler, in a sense, was more or less one of themselves: that he had consorted with Marxists, admired Communists, and found in Bolshevism a way forward. Conservatives were unhappy to see their ideological map of Europe so drastically redrawn. In his next book, *Make and Break with the Nazis* (1941), Rauschning observed that *Hitler Speaks* had been widely rejected "because it upset the general assessment of Nazism as a merely nationalist movement, and showed that its real roots lay in Marxism" (p. 194). And that is evidently right. The *Times Literary Supplement* review of *Hitler Speaks* (16 December 1939) had coolly noticed that "from Nazism, as this book portrays it, to Bolshevism is barely a step." And no wonder if socialists too found it hard to accept: "at the best, historical fiction", Richard Crossman had called it damningly in *The New Statesman* (16 December 1939). But if fiction was strange, the facts were stranger still; and Nazi war propaganda during the Soviet Pact could be explicitly socialist, calling on the British masses to demand of their leaders "Socialism in Action." Even Hitler's anti-Semitism was essentially anti-bourgeois, as Rauschning believed by the time he came to write *Make and Break*: "The principle of these inventions must be sought in Socialism, in Marx and Sorel" (p. 202).

Meanwhile Henri Rollin's *L'Apocalypse de notre temps*, published in Paris in 1939, had similarly proclaimed the "Russian roots" of National Socialism, though most copies were destroyed after the occupation of France in 1940. The truth had no soil to grow in, in those days; and by 1945 it had withered from view. Rauschning, who was to settle in Oregon as a farmer after the Second World War, lived on to his mid-

nineties, dying as recently as 1982. He is by now a figure largely forgotten in modern German history, though George Orwell had praised him during the War, in *Horizon* (August 1941). But he is not known to have been a myth-maker; and recent German research has shown that his reports of Hitler's conversation in 1932-34 are likely to be essentially trustworthy.⁴ The Bismarckian who lost his faith in Nazism may, after all, have been telling the literal truth about his master and his master's mind. If he was, it would help to explain some of the deeply resistant ambiguities of Hitler's ideological convictions.

3. The Neglected Connection

HITLER WAS NEVER A MARXIST, as Mussolini once was; and yet he could tell a confidante in 1934 that he had learnt a lot from Marx. His public hatred of Marxism, from first to last, may never have been anything less than sincere. But though it may have been the truth, I doubt if it was ever the whole truth. As a young activist in Munich, Professor Walter Laqueur has shown in *Russia and Germany* (1965), Hitler never appeared to regard Communism as the main enemy: when he attacked "Communism" in those hungry, stormy years after 1919 when many hoped, and more feared, that a defeated Germany might quickly follow Lenin's path, he seems to have meant the ruling Social Democrats who had accepted the Versailles Pact—a use of language well calculated to confuse contemporaries and biographers alike. Professor Laqueur helpfully quotes a parallel from *Bolshevism* (1924), by Dietrich Eckhart, Hitler's friend and adviser in those early years, who had demanded a "German Bolshevism" hostile to rents and dividends and intent on forcing the German rich to disgorge their wealth. The socialist roots of National Socialism are not just a matter of party title: they are confirmed by public record and public debate. By the time he wrote *Mein Kampf*, Hitler's anti-Soviet sentiment is, of course, entirely clear; but whether he ever ceased to be a socialist in a wider sense is another matter.

In his own estimation, it appears, he never did. As late as January 1943, according to Albert Speer in his *Spandau: the Secret Diaries* (1976), Hitler derided Franco as a fat little sergeant; and he demanded superior treatment for Spanish Communists in German-occupied France. At least, he told Speer, Communists were neither democrats nor reactionaries:

"They're lost to democracy, and to that reactionary crew around Franco—we have real chances there. I believe you to the letter, Speer, that they were impressive people [p. 167]."

During the Spanish Civil War, he added, the idealism had been altogether with the Reds, and the Catholic Church had always oppressed the Spanish people. "One of these days we'll be able to make use of them", he told Speer—sending the Reds back into Spain to start the Civil War all over again, "but with us on the opposite side." And on the same day he ordered special privileges for his Spanish Communist prisoners.

⁴ Theodor Schieder, *Hermann Rauschnings Gespräche mit Hitler als Geschichtsquelle* (Opladen, 1972).

But then, as Speer perceptively remarks earlier in his diaries, Hitler always "hated what he admired"; so that his hatred of Jews, Stalin, and Communism amounted to an "admiration that he refused to acknowledge" (p.30). That is an ambiguity that may have caused evidence to be misinterpreted for a long time. In the Nazi mind, noisy hatred is a tribute of frustrated praise, and envious emulation can lie at the heart of its bitterest diatribes. Certainly Hitler's opposition to Marxism was at no time of his life instinctive or immediate. Early and late in his political life, and even at the height of his war with the USSR, it was a fervid compound of rejection and admiration fuelled by envy. In the history of revolutionary socialism, Marx had said it first, as his disciples believed, and (in part at least) got it wrong: Hitler would correct and complete his faith and his dogma. As like contends with like, so were Fascism and Communism enemies in collision for a whole generation after 1918—contesting, like heavily armoured vehicles at high speed, the same space at the same time.

Goebbels, too, in the 1920s, could be openly pro-Soviet. The good Nazi, he wrote in *The Second Revolution* (1926),

"looks towards Russia, because Russia is that country most likely to take the road to socialism with us; because Russia is an ally nature has given us against the devilish temptations and corruptions of the West [p.47]."

and he called the defaming of the infant USSR the work of "a chorus of bourgeois liars and ignoramuses"—adding that no Czar had ever understood the Russian people as Lenin had done. He had given the peasants land and freedom.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, there is no case for thinking of Hitler as any sort of consistent thinker; and those who agonise over his faith and works soon throw up their hands at the spectacle of a zany mish-mash of ill-digested and derivative ideas. The very confusion of his writings has protected them, I suspect, from serious analysis—perhaps the last of his tricks to be exposed, and in some ways his best. Hitler simply did not care about writing, or about desk-work of any kind; and it is reasonable to guess that he would never have written *Mein Kampf* at all if he had not found time heavy on his hands in a prison cell. Widely read in his wilful way, he was openly a man of untrained mind, and resolute that no teacher and no book would ever train it. Despising everything but action, he was untempted by authorship, and the recent forger's *canard* that he kept a diary was always implausible. The published writings and reported conversations that survive are, of course, a chaos; and even if their sheer content did not repel, they would still look shoddy as argument and unkempt in style. But I believe a picture can be made of Hitler's sense of the one political doctrine, Bismarckian nationalism apart, that he is known to have studied. That doctrine was Marx's.

Like Bismarck, Marx had been a German. Like Bismarck, he was abundantly in the political air of the Germany out of which Hitler rose, in the years before and after the First World War. And Hitler acknowledged the debt. The task now—no easy one—is to relate his public revilings of Marxism to his private avowals of a deep-felt intellectual debt; and it can be done.

EARLY IN *Mein Kampf*, in its second chapter, Hitler attacked "the Jewish doctrine of Marxism" for its crass denial that "nationhood and race have a primary significance"—degrading as that denial must be, he argues, to all human life and civilisation. If Hitler's argument had stopped there, it would be easy to suppose that he shared the simple view of most socialists today that Marxism was not a doctrine of race. But he does not stop there. At a mid-point in his book, in a chapter entitled "People and Race" (ch.11), Hitler attacks Lenin's Russia on the interesting ground that the Bolshevik Jews who (as he believed) governed the infant USSR had already begun their own programme of racial extermination, "the great and final revolution." In Russia the Jew had already shown his true nature:

"In the course of a few years he endeavours to exterminate all those who represent the national intelligence. And by thus depriving the peoples of their natural intellectual leaders, he fits them for their fate as slaves under a lasting despotism."

That is a very exact account of what the Nazis were to attempt in occupied Poland and elsewhere after 1939, systematically deporting and killing leaders of intellectual life like priests and professors. What is remarkable is that as early as *Mein Kampf* Hitler believed Lenin had already done just that in Russia itself:

"Russia furnishes the most terrible example of such a slavery. In that country, the Jew has killed or starved thirty million people in a bout of savage fanaticism, partly by the use of inhuman torture."

And he warns that a day of reckoning is coming:

"The final consequence is not just that the peoples lose all their freedom under the domination of the Jews, but that those parasites themselves will disappear. The death of the victim is followed, sooner or later, by the death of the vampire."⁵

Thirty million. . . . There is something of an uncanny coincidence about Hitler hitting on that figure for Lenin's exterminations. If it was not at that time a fact of Communist extermination, it may not be far out as a prediction. Robert Conquest in *The Great Terror* (1968) has suggested 25-30 million as a probable total for the exterminations of Lenin and Stalin taken together, between the October Revolution of 1917 and Stalin's death in 1953. So Hitler's guess was to become

⁵ Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Munich, 1924), ch. 11, "Volk und Rasse":

"In wenigen Jahren versucht er [der Jude], die nationalen Träger der Intelligenz auszurotten, und macht die Völker, indem er sie ihrer natürlichen geistigen Führung beraubt, reif zum Sklavenlos einer dauernden Unterjochung.

Das furchtbarste Beispiel dieser Art bietet Russland, wo er an dreissig Millionen Menschen in wahrhaft fanatischer Wildheit teilweise unter unmenschlichen Quälen tötete oder verhungern liess, um einem Haufen jüdischer Literaten und Börsenbanditen die Herrschaft über ein grosses Volk zu sichern.

Das Ende aber ist nicht nur das Ende der Freiheit der vom Jüden unterdrückten Völker, sondern auch das Ende dieser Völkerparasiten selber. Nach dem Tode des Opfers stirbt auch früher oder später der Vampir."

more or less true, it may be, and then by the most savage of ironies: he had spoken too soon. And it is doubly significant that he should speak of torturing victims to death—an essential element in the Nazi programme from the foundation of Dachau as the first concentration-camp of the *Reich* in 1933.

Mein Kampf is a compound of fascination and repulsion. In its handling of Marxism, above all, it amounts bluntly to a declaration of revenge. Revenge is an element in Nazi ideology that has recently been underestimated; its causes and its sources are not now much studied, and not much valued when they are. We do not know, or do not easily accept, that Nazism was a reply to Communism, or that the Holocaust (as it is now called) could ever have been seen as a vengeful act on those who had already supposedly committed mass exterminations of whole peoples as early as Lenin's dictatorship of 1917-24. And yet that theme was to echo obsessively through Hitler's speeches as leader in the 1930s, and it is hard to doubt that the killing of the Jews in 1941-45, in Nazi understanding, was retributive. What the Jews received, in that fanatical view, they had already done to others. No wonder if Speer believed that Hitler hated what he admired, or that his bitterest enmities were towards those he envied and sought to outdo.

4. Sympathies & Antipathies

THERE MAY BE SEVERAL REASONS, I suggest, why Hitler's debt to Marxism has been so largely neglected. One is that the racist element in Marxism has been widely ignored in our own age, though understood and even applauded before 1914 by socialists themselves. And to ignore Marxist racialism is to dismiss, at the outset, any serious possibility that Hitler might owe anything important to Marx.

Again, the sincerity of Hitler's anti-Marxism convinced the millions who heard it in the 1930s, whether for him or against him. Paradoxical as it may sound, I believe they were right to be convinced. But Speer's interpretation of motive casts reasonable doubt on whether Hitler's hostility was ever a simple dogmatic rejection. It was the envy, rather, of a dedicated nationalist in an hour of defeat after 1918 who, impressed beyond all persuasion of the urgent case for revolutionary violence, saw a corrupt and imperfect version of that view triumph in a backward eastern land and even presume to spread its influence into Germany. Soviet Marxism and its German allies must have represented for the young Hitler a hopelessly incomplete view of human history, if only because it was an internationalist view; and a hopelessly corrupt view, if only because he believed the Russian and German Communist Parties to be led and inspired by cosmopolitan Jews. But it was still a dogma out of which Nazism would take its rise. Nazism was a totalitarian answer to totalitarianism, answering like with like.

That interpretation was sometimes suggested by foreign observers at the time. Mussolini and Hitler had devised national forms of Communism, as the 1930s sometimes believed; and Hitler's title of "National Socialism" for the party he led was not always seen as cynical, even by socialists. "A socialist experiment" is what Harold Nicolson called

Mussolini's Italy in his diary when, in January 1932, he visited Rome with Sir Oswald Mosley. Fascism was fighting fire with fire.

And that emulation, equally, may never have been anything less than sincere in its hatred. Perhaps we need a new term or phrase to explain Hitler's Marxism and its complex impulses. Jealousy is too simple; but certainly Lenin and Hitler remind one of two rivals in love with the same woman—detesting each other not because they disagree, but precisely because they agree so completely on what in all the world it is that matters most. And what mattered most for both was to replace plutocracy—or capitalism (what Marx often identified as “Jewish greed”)—with the rule of a new revolutionary élite that was dogmatically pure.

“The part played by the bourgeoisie is finished—permanently”, Hitler once told Rauschning (*Hitler Speaks*, pp.48-49), in a monumentally inaccurate prophecy. That was the first common ground. And the second was to see that the call of dogmatic purity made extermination simply inevitable.

Since there are millions who will not accept the new order of Lenin or Hitler, history demands that they should die. So dogmatic purity equals extermination. For the first time in Europe since the Inquisition, perhaps, Lenin and Hitler enacted the notion of killing by category, with financiers, kulaks, and Jews in the role of heretics.

But it was not Hitler who invented the notion of killing by category for modern Europe, when after 1939 he destroyed whole classes of beings like incurables, gypsies, or Jews. That doctrine, shrouded in notions of “progress” and “historical inevitability”, is to be found in the public writings of Marx and Engels as early as the 1840s. It had been enacted already by Lenin in the death-camps he created in northern Russia in 1918, when Hitler was only an aspiring leader of a national movement in Germany not yet fashioned or formed. And, I am convinced, it had been revealed to him as a doctrine as early as 1913 when, as a 24-year-old wanderer still utterly unknown to fame, he had settled in a Munich boarding-house and there devoured, in his lonely hours, the writings of the socialists.

Cargo Cult

I

There is a tall man in a beige and waxy suit,
His fawn attaché case beside the reading stand
Where the government newspaper hangs. Dating
From the previous week, it announces summer sales.
“A request may be received for a volunteer

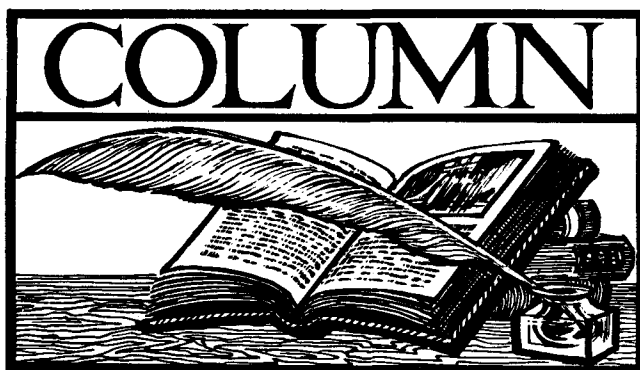
To work with Boran watchmen and Kikuyu
Market ladies in the field of adult literacy.”
In the stairwell there were four Africans,
Their leather coats, and yet, apart from
Her and me, I saw no one in the building.

As I left, they all assumed I knew
The meaning of their softly spoken
Instructions, when I was uncertain.
Their pink tongues uncurved, “Good morning, Sir.”
I was shown a side door to the street.

II

Like the crake of a pheasant heard suddenly beside
The parade of shops, I was dispossessed.
When I had brushed at that mark causing you
To jump so, I straightened up beside four people
In a car. The shadowed man in a front seat
Turned to pass a flask to his companions.

Ian Pople



VERY SOON, 1984 will be the date on last year's diary and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* will again be George Orwell's novel instead of a peg for fugitive prophecies of doom. The new film version may survive; the National Theatre adaptation of *Animal Farm* should run and run: but the hype, at least, will be over. No more padded-out reminiscences ("George Orwell in the Lower Fourth"); no more pilgrimages ("In Search of Orwell's Islington"); no more dustbin-hunting ("As I Please? A Study of Orwell's Job Applications"); no more students' cribs. At the Frankfurt Book Fair, I looked in vain for "THOUGHTCRIME: An Adult Board Game" or *Big Brother's Favourite Pop-up Book*. Don't rush for the exits: the end is in sight.

But before the curtain falls and the house lights come up, there's still one more performer on the bill. This is W. F. Bolton, Professor of English at Rutgers University, New Jersey; and he got into the act last May with the British publication of *The Language of 1984: Orwell's English and Ours*.¹

The title's certainly tempting. At a glance, I expected one of two things. The book might, I thought, be a survey of how much *Newspeak* had entered ordinary usage—either directly or in analogous formations devised by hucksters, propagandists, and other trend-setting crooks. "Industrial action"—"make this country great again"—"our society"—"law and order"—"peace"—"community arts": there are plenty of words and phrases to be approached with a mental Geiger counter or sniffer-dog. alternatively, Professor Bolton's book might well have contrasted Orwell's prose with the language of his acolytes and critics. That could have been unkind fun.

Instead, *The Language of 1984* is an extended polemic. Its avowed aim is to offer "a double perspective: a telephoto close-up that studies Orwell's English in detail across the 34 years since his death, and a wide-angle panorama of English today in which he occupies the middle distance." What all this turns out to mean is a professional's examination of Orwell's opinions on English, expressed most notably in his 1946 *Horizon* essay, "Politics and the English Language." "His admirers", Professor Bolton concedes, "may be disappointed in this book for what they see as its unsympathetic view of him." Disappointed? Infuriated! But it raises broader issues than that.

¹ *The Language of 1984: Orwell's English and Ours*. By W. F. Bolton. Basil Blackwell in association with André Deutsch. £19.50, paper £7.50.

The onslaught begins stealthily, the merest rumble of distant guns. Orwell, *pace* Matthew Hodgart, "was not, after all, an 'amateur philologist of genius', but he had an instinct for psycholinguistics." The tone of condescension quickly sharpens. "Orwell's remarks [on the beautiful English of Gaelic-speaking Scots] came only after his 1946 move to the Scottish island of Jura, not as the outcome of study, so they were more than usually rooted in his subjective point of view." In other words, they were backed by experience, not books. Elsewhere, Professor Bolton expounds "the difference between what Orwell thought self-evident and what well-informed English students now assume about language." Orwell's linguistic *bêtes noires* he dismisses as "pet peeves." "Slang", he writes, "always interests amateur language-watchers because it is mostly a matter of vocabulary—it involves next to no grammar or phonology, so it is easy for the untrained to describe."

Of course, Orwell had vulnerable habits. He read widely, absorbed his source-material, and sometimes forgot its origin. He made wildly sweeping, exhilarating statements. He was often his own guinea-pig, and generalised from his own case. Apparently, he thought in pictures, then sought language to fit them—which leads Professor Bolton to call him, in a colleague's words, a "naive realist" for whom there was a "deep philosophical distinction . . . between language and thought." He knew nothing of Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole*. He had probably never heard of "phrasal verbs" or "conversions", and he thought "noun adjuncts" were adjectives. In fact he hadn't attended seminars at Rutgers.

Professor Bolton's patronising manner reminds me of the way that some modern architects react to laymen's dislike of tower blocks, repetitive "modules", unadorned glass and concrete, tombstone offices, and "brutalism." Nettled, pained, and pitying, they imply that we don't understand. We're nostalgic, ignorant, out-of-touch, and bourgeois. But we have to live with the wretched products of the architectural academies, until they fall down. Likewise we live with language. We're not professional experts, but we are amateurs and dilettanti—loving and delighting in words. We use them constantly. We make choices: we have preferences. We dare to have "pet peeves."

We must be profoundly annoying; and Professor Bolton is undoubtedly annoyed—so much so that it leads him into unfairness. Although at one point he condemns Orwell for a "tawdry syllogism", he himself commits at least three *non sequiturs*. First, he quotes Orwell as saying "For one man, or a clique, to try and make up a language . . . is . . . absurd"—then adds: "If so, any attempt to resist language change, a favourite proposal of Orwell's, is fruitless." Is it? Secondly, he writes:

"The nostalgic Orwell reviled mechanical progress even while he employed it [he typed, broadcast and shaved] . . . The electronic progress that he saw only in its infancy and hence overlooked has since created a 'second Industrial Revolution', a revolution of information rather than effort. So [my italics] Orwell's attitudes towards technology, inconsistent about the machines of the first Industrial Revolution, are irrelevant about those of the second."

Finally, in another context, Professor Bolton is ironic at the expense of a fellow-American: "Simon does not say . . . how Brustein can be 'distinguished' if he employs loose usage, or how the usage can be loose if distinguished people employ it." What was that about a syllogism?

ONE OF ORWELL'S MISDEMEANOURS was to attack American usage. He recognised its vitality, but deplored its way of replacing "strong primary words by feeble euphemisms", and he detested neologisms like "*beautician*", superfluous phrasal verbs like "*to face up to*", and conversions like the verb "*to contact*." Professor Bolton patriotically shows that all such devices are "legitimate", in the sense that they obey linguistic rules: but in the process, I think, he misses two important points.

The first concerns the meaning of "rules." Earlier, discussing pronunciation, Professor Bolton remarks: "Rules must be at work to produce these results." This suggests that rules determine behaviour, as human laws are intended to do. But in the sciences, including linguistics, aren't they in fact hypothetical generalisations, formed by inductive reasoning from observation and experiment? Rules don't rule, OK?

The second point follows from the first. A law-abiding citizen gains credit; but does a rule-abiding usage? Only, surely, if it's acceptable on other grounds. What Orwell was really complaining about was not that the usages he disliked contravened some grammatical precept, but that they jarred—on his ear and his sensibility. His objections were socio-politico-aesthetic (to coin a phrase he would probably have spurned). When he called "*to contact*" a "disgusting verb", he no doubt impugned its novelty and seeming ungainliness, but felt even more that it was cheaply slick. As first used in Britain, it was the mark of the smart-alec, the hustler, or the ad-man. "I'll contact B.J." You could almost see the vodka-and-tonic and the grey flannel suit.

Well, as S. J. Perelman once put it, *de gustibus* ain't what dey used to be. Tastes differ, and they change. But you don't have to be a linguistic fuddy-duddy, set in the ways of British Edwardian middle-class diction, teleguided by half-forgotten Etonian Greek and Latin, to find some of the expressions blithely quoted or used by Professor Bolton not to your taste.

"The Soviets have orbited another spacecraft" . . . A student who has had the maximum number of loans has 'loaned out' . . . 'max out' meaning 'reach and pass one's maximum performance'; cf. 'veg out', 'become torpid as though in a vegetative state', and 'hulk out', 'go into a frenzy like the character in the television series *The Incredible Hulk*' . . . the blitzer or the blitzee . . . 'Shop A & P' . . . 'Bike Europe' . . . 'Dive Florida' . . . a 'quike' (four-wheel cycle) . . . a 'hittile', that is 'a missile so accurate that it could actually hit the target' . . . initialisms [abbreviations pronounced letter by letter] . . . exploitive . . . credentialist formal education . . . the power outage that stops Smith's lift . . . machines, journals, and offspring will all be vectors of the special language of the field . . . produced students more or less inadequate to communicate in a foreign language. . . . The theoretically monolingual

society renders implausible the promise of international valence to FL students. . . ."

Four pages after that last sentence, Professor Bolton is unwise enough to write:

"Orwell's lack of analytical interest in the language of literature revealed itself in throw-away criticism like 'It is hard work to dredge a meaning out of such morasses of words.'"

"THERE IS NO progress, only change." Such was the chant set up some years ago by one political heckler. Every time the platform speaker talked of progress, he heard the same slogan from the back of the hall. At last, his patience snapped. "Oh yes there is", he shouted, pointing a bony finger. "It'd be a change if you stopped interrupting—and I for one would call it progress."

The Language of 1984 reminded me of that incident. Its fundamental message, to Orwell or anyone else who seeks to conserve clear, forthright, subtle, elegant, and resourceful language against any kind of *dreck*, seems to be: "There is no decadence, only change."

"To resist changes in meaning [writes Professor Bolton] is to fight for something we would not recognize as language and could not use as we use English."

That sounds a fine, knowledgeable statement, supported by all the past shifts in sense recorded in the dictionaries. But take a look at some of the changes unopposed by Professor Bolton. He seems to take no exception when "*flout*" and "*flaunt*" are confused, "*mitigate*" and "*militate*", "*veracious*" and "*voracious*", "*eminent*" and "*imminent*." He seems to welcome the likely death of the apostrophe: this "will aid the many writers for whom [it] is intractable." Admittedly, he seeks to refute Professor Mario Pei's accusation that linguists now hold "that one form of language is as good as another." "For any particular purpose", he answers, ". . . the user must skilfully choose appropriate forms of language from the community's repertoire." In the last sentence of the book, he commends "plain, vigorous English prose"—although some might hanker after mystery and stealth as well.

It all seems very reasonable: yet the tenor of the book's main argument is still relativistic and even populist. "Only in itself", says Professor Bolton, "is 'one form of language as good as another'." If that statement has any meaning and is not mere evasion, it contradicts the facts. Who would claim that pidgin, "in itself", is as good as Saul Bellow's English or Alain Robbe-Grillet's French?

IF PROFESSOR BOLTON, to put it mildly, seems tempted by linguistic relativism, there may be a political explanation. His problems with Orwell began, it seems, when he assigned "Politics and the English Language" to his freshman composition students. You may recall its six rules of thumb:

1. Never use a metaphor, simile or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.

2. Never use a long word where a short one will do.
3. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
4. Never use the passive where you can use the active.
5. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
6. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

Professor Bolton quotes a colleague, Cleo McNelly, on the difficulties freshmen find with Orwell's advice. They're unused to seeing, let alone identifying, figures of speech in print; they lack the "versatility" to replace long words by short; as halting writers, they're unlikely to use too many words, but rather too few. And so on, until the students reach Rule 6. There, says Ms McNelly, "their problem is that they do not know what sounds 'outright barbarous' to middle class, well-educated ears."

"Why then are they at a university?" might be a typical British response, closely followed by "What's wrong with the teaching in American schools?" Both questions, and especially the latter, are increasingly asked in the United States. Much of the later part of *The Language of 1984* is a would-be riposte to critics of the system and of "illiterate" usage. Reasonably enough, Professor Bolton points out that declining scores in verbal and written English tests actually reflect "the growing proportion of poor and minority students" in the Admissions Testing Program. Slightly more disturbing is his remark that "The far larger numbers who now receive diplomas naturally do not have the elite qualifications of their forebears." In that case, do they deserve the diplomas? And if they don't, isn't this a betrayal of trust? At all events, aren't greater efforts needed to improve everyone's performance, rather than let standards slip?

This is the kind of talk that really stings Professor Bolton. "The henny-penny school" is what he calls such snipers.

"Their criticism is ill-informed, indiscriminate, and above all unconstructive; it abuses the large majority of English language users, and it renders language an unattractive subject to them."

Attempts to "rearrange" the "language system" of, say, Afro-American English speakers, if only to help them find jobs, "will rightly strike students as something between a risible misunderstanding of the language and an arrogant assault on their entire culture."

It's easy to sympathise with such democratic sentiments: but that word "culture" calls for a sniffer-dog. Is the "culture" of black ghettos something to be treasured like "culture" in the older sense of the term? True, words change their meanings: but let's be clear which one we're using. The parents of the eleven black schoolchildren in Michigan, who in 1977 sued the schools for not helping them learn "standard English as defined by Federal law", clearly didn't regard "Afro-American English" as an asset. But then, like George Orwell, they weren't linguistic experts. They simply thought that their children were being deprived.

IN MANY FIELDS TODAY, the experts are at odds with the amateurs. Architecture and education are the obvious instances; in Britain, the established church is another. Sophisticated theologians cast doubt on the old simplicities. They may be right: but congregations aren't drawn in by quibbles. Seeking a wider audience, churchmen jettison archaic language: but the boardroom banality they substitute—"And also with you" for "And with thy spirit"—fires no passion and awakes no soul. Here, as in modern buildings and English faculties, the layman's inclined to feel like a Frenchman in June 1940, when his official guardians had surrendered or fled.

If architects put up monstrosities, if teachers of English merely count heads to determine standards, and if men of God vandalise their inheritance, what are the rest of us to do? The simple answer is: join the Resistance—and don't be afraid to keep motley company. George Orwell was crankish, unacademic, and sometimes silly. Whenever it mattered, he was right.

M

Critical Books

Squiggles and underlinings, queries, cries
of affirmation, ridicule, or rage,
brash tokens of a common enterprise,
welcome his late arrival at the page.
And when the text is clean, the margin clear,
it's hard to be content with drawing a map,
denying the impulse of the pioneer
to mark his trail with *Hm*, *Spot on*, or *Crap*.

Keeping his pencil caged—though what he's reading,
the very latest probe on *Lycidas*,
moves him to sympathy for Milton's ghost—
he prays, with a dark sense of mutants breeding,
to be retired before some gifted ass
prefixes "deconstructionist" with "post."

Richard Kell



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I

Sunday, soundless and sultry,
an aching, rainless day, ending
in dry thunder: all afternoon

Herr Gutenberg, pretending to read
Mephisto, watches alternately
the silent silver climb the sky

from the American base nearby
and Benno and Bianca playing
tennis with the haphazard happiness

of a beginner and a professional
practising to prove each other in love.
Herr Gutenberg couldn't be better pleased,

and as September assembles the evening
into a gentleness, as if
a hurried darkening would hurt the world,

he takes his walk to the orchard by the river,
a shelving ledge of land where parlour browns
and apple reds blend in the pasture green.

The snail is wrapped asleep on a stalk of parsley.
Bulrushes like distaffs stand stiff
in the dark tranquillity of the water's edge,

a scarlet skiff drifts at its mooring,
and swallows are flying fast and loose
across the earnest surface of the past.

The present has already known the future:
and suddenly he is surprised to find himself
humming *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden*

and thinking of the room where his mother
died. Death as a science:
drapes dark as morello cherries,

chairs plush with velvet blood,
heavy plum counterpanes and carpets.
Morphallactic silence

in the still, steady air's replete repose:
the shapes of mortality, ready to drop,
dumb with the animal fall,

the soft magic of sudden becoming.
His father kept that room for many years
exactly as she left it at her death,

and used to stand at the window with his son
examining his conscience. For he knew
he hadn't loved her as he might have done.

A wagtail waiting for nothing on a rowlock:
acceptance is everything, and peace
means to accept without a history.

II

In the cathedral square the swingboats bowl,
up, and under, sudden, and up again,
thrusting wonder upon the soul.

The fair has come to town. The miracle men
have built their mystical halls of light and sound,
and fantasy, rough beast of bedtime,

is born again; the posters pinned
on fences and on trees proclaim the fact
in colours heraldic as a cigarette packet's,

it must be true. And they have come,
the lovers, the mothers and fathers, the children and dreamers,
determined to love deceit's reality,

while bells above belabour the secular air
with the sacred amazement of elsewhere,
and out the first-floor window above

the Einhorn Apotheke an elderly Jew
(who local legend says is a distant
descendant of Mendelssohn who bribed

his way through the War) leans happily out
to see these pleasures innocent of purpose.
All trades conduce to love's success:

a wheel of cheese is V'd at ten to ten,
a woman sells a swab of candy floss,
and Benno shoots at thin iconic men

who die with an ironic ping. Bianca
wins a plastic rose for knocking
tins off a shelf, and when she threads it

through her teeth and dances a flamenco
Benno barks a laugh and tells her he loves her
very much. Which Bianca had rather assumed.

Meanwhile the moon investigates
the Moltkestrasse and the Judengasse
and prowls along the Theodor-Heuss-Allee

and even in the darkest happiness
see now, the scythe of birth
shines on the earth.

III

The box that smells of rotting peaches binds
the cemetery in the geometry
of taste: Catholic Germany

clumsily southern, Mediterranean
even in death. He splashes the sign of the cross
with a sprig of box across his parents' grave

and thinks of the wealthy frenchified flesh
that strolled with parasols, whose menfolk built
the villas of the Jugendstil . . . youth

elaborated as an elegance
available to Wilhelmine resources,
a middleness of money, love and truth,

fantasy sternly disciplined to fit
a spirit of perpetual negation
crap-shooting through creation.

He walks with a strident anger he does not
understand to the darkened garden, where
he finds a tennis ball in the grass.

On the verandah, Benno and Bianca
would like to tell him that they plan to marry,
but seeing him fling the ball into the trees

and run inside in wrathful aimlessness
decide it wouldn't be the moment:
he'd only misunderstand.

IV *after Goethe*

Peace in the peaks, and in
the pine and poplar tops
the breath of breezes stops:

the birds in the forest have fallen
silent. Soon you too will rest.
Patience.

NOTES & TOPICS

Paris Notebook

By Jean-François Revel

Tocqueville's Discovery



A CENTURY-AND-A-HALF ago, in the summer of 1834, Alexis de Tocqueville, who had just turned 29 years old, delivered to his publisher the final manuscript of *Democracy in America*. The book appeared in January 1835. If the year 1985 is to become the "year of Tocqueville", as 1984 has been the "year of Orwell", and for equally topical reasons, I can only hope that it will at least have the effect of raising one of the greatest thinkers of modern times into his proper place.

The wish may seem redundant at a time when it is unusual for speeches, articles and books not to be embellished by some apt little quotation from Tocqueville. More and more studies of his work are emerging, and we also have the sound and painstaking biography by André Jardin.¹ Yet even though political science has restored him to both use and reputation after a century of oblivion, Tocqueville remains a peculiarly marginal writer.

Do the literate public and university students have any notion that *Democracy in America* measures up to the most celebrated texts on the organisation of human societies—Aristotle's *Politics*, Plato's *Republic*, Montesquieu's *The Spirit of Laws*—and that it unquestionably surpasses Rousseau's *Social Contract*, whose abstraction and theoretical desiccation bury the human beneath its principles? Who really recognises that *The Ancien Régime and the Revolution* is "*une oeuvre pour toujours*", to be ranked with Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*? For in each case we are dealing with works by historian-philosophers who, while they remain scrupulously true to the historical past, see through the upheavals of their immediate subjects to ask a question which is

valid for all men and at all times. And yet it is only recently that Tocqueville has received or regained his due rank in revolutionary historiography. I can testify that it is not very long since a French student in higher education might take any number of courses on *la grande Révolution* taught by France's most eminent professors without hearing so much as a mention of *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*.

Finally, why is this great French writer kept hidden from us? Even though the obligatory Tocqueville quotations which lard contemporary speech-making rarely fail to impress the hearer, what textbook will take it for granted that the *Souvenirs*, Tocqueville's recollections, are as much a high point of French literature as the *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* of Chateaubriand or the *Mémoires* of Cardinal de Retz? What candidate for our *baccalauréat* is taught that, "politology" apart, Tocqueville is first of all one of the purest artists of French prose? For it is not enough to say that he "writes well." He possesses that secret rhythm, the invisible thread behind the phrase, the melody running through the text like an impalpable bond. This is not the mere placing of words: this is style, which transcends good writing.

WHAT WAS IT THAT gave rise to the vision of History developed by this uniquely original mind, so *quick* in its originality, by this lone wolf whose conclusions owe nothing to any previous currents of thought and who sired none himself, at least in any immediate posterity? To help us unravel this riddle we now have available the vast researches of André Jardin, published in Paris earlier this year to great critical acclaim. The year of Tocqueville will set too many authors itching to write too many occasional books for me not to be obliged to give warning that the work has already been done, and well done, in the biographical sphere at any rate, both for now and for some time to come. It seems that there is not a single accessible source, known or unknown, unpublished or neglected, that André Jardin has not incorporated into his monumental labour. How one admires these biographies of great men, in which the reader reaches page 100 and the book is still explaining how the great-grandparents came to be married.

In Tocqueville's case, at least, nothing in this lengthy preparation is irrelevant, for his descent from the oldest nobility of France makes him aware in the most concrete manner of the question central to his thinking: namely, how does a nation make the transition from an aristocratic to a democratic society? There is no restoring the former, he considers, thus "betraying" his own *milieu*. Democracy is inevitable: how is it to be rendered viable? For in France it had not yet attained that enviable state of affairs. France had rejected the aristocratic order, not to create a stable democracy, but to embark upon an era of revolutionary instability, which was still in force. Why? What conditions must a democracy fulfil in order to function properly? Hence his voyage to the United States in the 1830s, with its purpose of observing a stable democracy in working order.

Tocqueville's book on America is far more than a study of the United States. It is also—and more importantly (particularly in volume II, published in 1840)—a study of demo-

¹ *Alexis de Tocqueville, 1805-1859*. By ANDRÉ JARDIN. Hachette Littérature, £15.95.

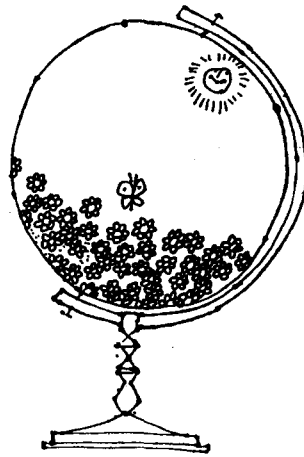
cracy in general: its nature, its conditions, its advantages and possible decadence, the moral and mental states of mind that it requires or engenders. And also the view of themselves and their situation (and its relation to the public authority) which is held by the individual, the village, the school, the parish, the entrepreneur, the wage-earner, magistrate, law-breaker, artist, scholar, local councillor, and all the various associations and societies. Tocqueville derives from his observations the lesson that a democracy works well if *la société y domine le gouvernement*, if society dominates the government, and not vice versa.

Now, in Europe, and especially in France, democracy was thwarted by centralisation, which, incidentally, long predated the Revolution or Napoleon. Tocqueville articulates a problem which looks at first sight like some sort of provocative paradox—how to ensure that democracy does not strangle liberty. An outrageous question to a modern observer, but actually crammed with good sense; for when democracy is the heir of a centralised power within a society that lacks autonomy, then it fortifies that power. Tocqueville accepts universal suffrage unreservedly, unlike Marx, who condemns it in his *Eighteenth Brumaire*, like any good precursor of Lenin. The passage in question was suppressed in the second (1869) edition of Marx's pamphlet. But universal suffrage does not alleviate the evils of deep-rooted centralisation; on the contrary, it accentuates them. That surely is the key to understanding why France, and afterwards Europe, could abandon the *ancien régime* only to enter upon an age of latent or virulent revolutions rather than of stable democracy. As in the United States, the necessary condition of the latter would be "*la puissance créatrice de la base* (the creative power of the base)", to borrow André Jardin's phrase summarising Tocqueville. Without that power at the grass-roots, it is hard to reconcile liberty with the sovereignty of the people.

THE FACT IS THAT, in the course of the century that followed Tocqueville's death, Europe received its fair share of authoritarian régimes derived from universal suffrage. And in good republican France there is nothing more like a reinforcement of centralisation than yet another new reform aimed at "decentralising." For the French, even the soundest democracy stipulates only the means of appointing the central authority, not the extent of its powers or the use it makes of them. The current dispute about the use and conditions of the referendum vividly illustrates this partial corruption of democracy. For there is no dispute at all over the most important point, which is why the initiative for a referendum should be left to the arbitrary discretion of a single man, even if that man does happen to be the President of the Republic. As it is now defined, there is nothing in this institution which would have inhibited Louis XIV—who would have been delighted to learn that it was up to him, and only to him, to produce the key or keep it in his pocket.

The marriage of democracy and centralisation may give birth to absolutism. That is one of the truths that Tocqueville discovered—and discovered, as he himself remarked, "*obstinément, passionnément et tristement*."

The Swiss as a "Great Power"



THE SILLY TRADITIONAL cliché was to depict Switzerland as loutish.

The modern silliness is to trumpet a Marxist bromide that makes the *Confédération* out to be a kind of tentacular *cosa nostra* of Western capitalism, a multinational parasite sucking the lifeblood of the world.

Why do we have this "dark legend" of Switzerland, portraying the country as cloddish one minute and fiendish the next? The

question is wittily answered in a book I have been reading—*Faut-il brûler la Suisse?* (Julliard), by an author, Edgar Fasel, who has the advantage of being an expert in both the political and economic fields of his country's success.

Edgar Fasel was principal private secretary to one of the seven Federal Councillors and subsequently a top executive with Nestlé (that mysterious Swiss firm which, as is common knowledge, deliberately sets out to give all African children diarrhoea).

It is important to understand, he tells us, that Switzerland's economic success is a product of the application of some intelligence and a great deal of democracy. Switzerland in the 19th century was a fairly poor country—an "underdeveloped country", we would have called it. At the end of the 20th century it has one of the two highest average per capita incomes in the world, with the highest productivity after Japan. Or take another figure: in 1982 Switzerland invested 367 dollars per inhabitant in basic research, 112 more than the United States (in second place).

This success for European liberalism inevitably roused the wrath of the doctrinaires. They devised the legend of Switzerland as "exploiter of the Third World." It is unprovable, and yet (or, rather, therefore) people love it. It took greater ingenuity to misrepresent this "*démocratie témoin*", as André Siegfried called the Swiss Confederation in his classic work of that title (1948), as a totalitarian system. Fortunately, revolutionary luck came up with the Zurich "urban guerrilla." In 1980 the Zurich police closed down a self-styled "autonomous cultural centre", whose "autonomy" was qualified by the fact that it was importing drugs.

The closure sparked off some vandalism on the *de luxe* Bahnhofstrasse and a bit of street-fighting in the old town—vigorously abetted, it was learned later, by the head of the Soviet *Novosti* agency in Bern. (The government expelled him; calm returned.) Nevertheless the *Herald Tribune* put it all down as "reality" destroying "a myth"—that of "Switzerland as the world's model of democracy, a mythical vision that has trapped even the Swiss. . . ."

The author of the article (18 October 1980) did concede that it was hard to find anything wrong there—"Switzerland remains quiet, ordered, and impeccably clean." But that was a

bad sign: "You can almost smell the storm coming."

It takes a good measure of positive ill-will to refuse to recognise that in Switzerland democracy really does mean day by day government of the citizens by the citizens. The system inhibits any possibility of the abuse of power. As Gabriel Veraldi (half-Swiss, half-French) writes in his vigorous preface to the Fasel book, "Switzerland was built in opposition to the spirit of domination."

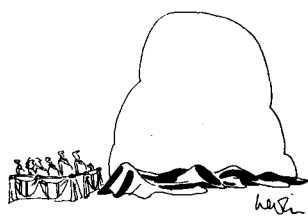
The principle of "*subsidiarité*", Fasel tells us, requires

"that a 'higher' authority in the social structure should not have to perform a function that a 'lower' authority can see to more naturally, more rationally, or more economically. The Confederation must not take the place of the canton, nor the canton of the commune, nor the commune of the family or the individual."

As a secret of Swiss efficiency, this is more important than any "secrecy" observed in the country's bank accounts. In the same spirit, social relations are governed by agreements that take account of the interests of workers and of entrepreneurs. The result is that Swiss wages are the highest in the world; there is no unemployment to speak of; and there are twice as many foreign workers, proportionately, in Switzerland as there are in France (14% there, but 28% in the canton of Geneva). And this social success story owes nothing to any "struggle" of the working class, for the Confederation has hardly seen a strike in the last half-century. *Quel scandale!*

Given, then, such special qualities as intelligence and good citizenship, you do not need to be a big country or boast a huge state apparatus to be a great power.

Coping with the Monolith



I DON'T SEE how anybody can deny a growing propensity today, in the industrialised countries (and even in the Third World), to reject the state. One is entitled to poke fun at the oversimplifications of the rival

competing calls for "less state" or "more state." But one would be wrong not to acknowledge the strength of the current of opinion hostile to the megalomania of the state, a current so international that not only Mrs Thatcher's Conservative Britain but the Socialist-oriented governments of Portugal, Spain, and Italy are beginning to think in practical terms about "denationalising" parts of the public sector that ought never to have been nationalised in the first place.

After the 1981 election in France and the wave of nationalisations that followed it, the foreign press, unlike French liberals, spoke less of a break than of a continuity with the past. After all, had not the French state already been more or less running France's economy for years? Quite so. Moreover, opinion was steadfastly in favour of further nationalisation and

of everything that conferred extended powers on the public authority. Towards the end of 1983 this trend was abruptly reversed. For the first time since the Second World War the French started to place their faith, as far as "saving the economy" was concerned, more in private enterprise than in the nationalised sector. In other fields, for instance in education and the press, hostility to the state's monopoly or to its authoritarian rules and regulations has often, since then, exceeded 70% in the opinion polls. So what happened?

To understand we must first know something of the origins, causes, evolution, intentions, and objectives of this *dirigisme*. Few recent publications have been as helpful here as Richard Kuisel's *Le Capitalisme et l'Etat en France* (published in translation by Gallimard, with an introduction by Jean Noël Jeanneney), a book that combines scholarly expertise with an elegant clarity.¹ Thanks to this US historian, not only do we see the economic history of our century with a fresh eye but its history as a whole, with its inextricable blend of material data, political structures, and psychological factors. And military events too, for the 1914-18 War gave a boost (as happens under every War Economy) to cooperation between industrialists and the state as well as to production estimates, allocations, and controls. It was after World War I that the expression "mixed economy" made its appearance. Nothing new or current about that, then. . . . It was around 1930 that the words "technocracy" and "planning" emerged, and "*dirigisme*" followed in the wake of Bertrand de Jouvenel's pioneering work, *L'Économie dirigée* (1928).

But the firm determination to plan the French economy in full earnest arose out of the humiliating defeat of 1940. Vichy, quite as much as the *Résistance*, attributed France's collapse on the battlefield to a deeper collapse at the level of industrial power, of demography, technology, and innovating entrepreneurial ambition. As well as backward-looking patriarchs of the "*retour à la terre*" school, the Vichy government included a number of modern technocrats who made the grave mistake of believing that they could revitalise France under enemy occupation, but their ideas for a post-War renewal differed little from those of the Resistance leaders. "Joining forces in a common rejection of the Third Republic", Kuisel writes, "both sides helped to pull France in the direction of a fresh economic configuration. . . ."

With the rejection of maximalist plans for a "transition to Socialism" in 1945, France was left with the two principal ideas bequeathed by the Resistance and Vichy: the French economy must be controlled in accordance with "a plan", and the French economy needed to "modernise." The nationalisations of the post-War period were conceived as tools of this kind of *dirigisme modernisateur* and not at all as the first step in a revolution of "the mode of production." The first *Commissaire au Plan*, Jean Monnet, involved business leaders in the formulation of the Plan to such effect that subsequently its directives ceased to be greeted as interfering and irrational dictates. The thinking behind the *dirigisme* of *l'économie concertée* (as Monnet's successor, Etienne Hirsch, called it) differed unequivocally from any kind of intended immediate or long-term collectivisation or *déprivatisation* of the economy. The planners did not claim to be replacing private enterprise and the market; they meant to complement them by bringing

¹ Richard Kuisel, *Capitalism and the State in Modern France* (Cambridge University Press, 1983).

greater accuracy of analysis, an overall vision, and a forward-looking imagination to an employer class that had too often been lacking in such qualities. As Kuisel observes:

“French planning assumed a neo-liberal character. It became a factor of economic growth rather than an advance towards Socialism.”

IT IS, THUS, to misconstrue “*le changement*” of 1981 to call it a simple accentuation of the old French dirigistic propensities. What has been behind the changes that have been effected (or projected) since 1981 is primarily a concern to enhance the power of the state as a tool for transforming society. If the state is taking over so many spheres of activity it is no longer (as in the earlier period) with the idea, or under the illusion, that they will function better under its control: it is to stop them operating outside itself. It is in order to remove, one by one, the obstacles limiting state power. These nationalisations cannot be justified on economic grounds, as experience has abundantly shown. The state is incapable of running this plethora directly, nor can it make up its mind to let others run it (as is shown by the hiring and firing among top public-sector jobs that has been dubbed “the waltz of the directors”), for that would mean a surrender of power. In the Socialist scheme of things, the economy has to serve the power of the state rather than the other way around, just as the customers become the servants of the public services and not the other way around. Education must serve the power of the state: hence the pursuit of a monopoly (now so embarrassingly abandoned, in the private-school controversy, by President Mitterrand). So must the press: hence a Press Act that covertly reintroduces the system of “prior authorisation” abolished in 1881. Even scientific research has become bureaucratised, and the political authorities decide who is to direct it.

ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, the aim since 1981 has been to kill off everything remaining outside the state, everything that has a life of its own and might offer resistance. That is how the present strategy of the executive is seen by the authors of *La liberté à refaire* (Pluriel, 486 pp.), a distinguished collection of French economists, jurists, judges, historians, and sociologists. According to them, this “*évolution vers le monolithe*” has not slowed one iota since the belt-tightening imposed by circumstances; it is going ahead with less fuss than at first but to just as much dogged effect.

But is not the power of that state executive quite legitimate? Was it not elected in accordance with all the democratic rules? Doubtless that is so; but does democracy consist in our going to the polls every seven years to elect a “big-shot” organisation that will subsequently wipe out everything external to itself? What makes the process all the more ominous is the fact that the state, preoccupied with swallowing up all centres of initiative that still exist outside itself, is doing its real job less and less well.

Clearly we have come a long way in France from the good old *dirigisme* of yesteryear. And it is no doubt this mixture of impotence and omnipotence that has provoked the fresh

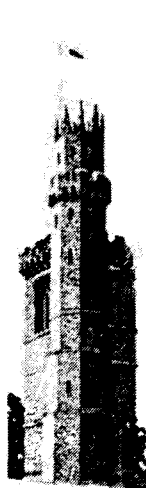
public reaction of rejection of the state, a reaction whose strength and intensity in France was shown by the recent European elections. Government *dirigisme* has been given the thumbs-down in the shape of a Communist electoral collapse and a Socialist *glissade*. However, I suspect that the defeat has redounded more to the benefit of the *anarchisme d'extrême droite* than to that of classical liberals alienated by a “*socialisme rampant*.” It is as yet an open question whether, when, and how “the ship of state” can reverse course.

London Commentary

The Exaltation of the Commonplace

The Range of Change

By Edward Pearce



“IT WAS A BRIGHT cold day in April and the clocks were striking thirteen.” The first line of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is eerie because it says something alien. It is part of Orwell’s affinity with so many of us that he cherished the familiar, the habitual: heavy coins, red pillar-boxes, old maids biking to Holy Communion on misty mornings. Every country has an identity, a hearth fire before which it is warmed. What is depressing is the extent to which over the last two decades parts of that identity have been altered, usually for no very productive or irresistible reason, and more often than not by governments calling themselves Conservative.

Some of the changes have a half-validity but manage nevertheless to seem symbolic of a more general decline. It was quite reasonable to get rid of the heavy copper small coinage which Orwell found reassuring. Three true pennies in mint condition weighed an ounce and they were 97% pure copper. With the price of copper where it was and the price of the British currency where it was going, no one could afford a coinage worth so much more melted down than in circulation. But my complaint is against trivial, frivolous change, entered into for grand and sententious reasons as part of the river of progress and inevitability, which was neither inevitable nor progressive.

So much of the change referred to has the look of a frantic scurrying back and forth to create the impression of energetic activity on the part of men morosely aware of their inability to do anything that actually mattered. By no accident this orgy of horse-vaulting and wall-bar scaling began in a period of

acknowledged decline, the mid 1960s (incidentally, for no good reason we now call *PT* by the affected name *PE* when physical education for most people means something very different). We have not only changed the copper coins into dreadful unwashable brown disks which look as if they had been given away with a packet of not very wholesome cereal, we have come up with a decimal system whose effect was to mask and, I rather suspect, to slightly accelerate the extent of the inflation. The copy of Orwell's *Selected Essays* from which I quoted is 203 pages long (Penguin, 1957), cost 2/6 (or, in the brute locution of reform, 12½ New Pence), the slightly shorter *Down and Out in Paris and London* in an edition of 1968 cost no more than 3/6 (18 New Pence). But *Italian Short Stories* (parallel text), identical in length and publisher with *Down and Out*, but brought out in 1981, cost £1.50 (30 old shillings), a seven-fold increase in 13 years, but one sweetly lost in the mists of our Napoleonic currency. With the causes of inflation I am not here concerned, except to point out that a quick glance through books bought from childhood until now will give you a nasty reminder of how ferocious that inflation has been.

What truly fascinates me is the idle-minded futility of a decimal currency. Less even than metrication can it claim to have done us any good. It was an act of conformity. Continental Europe does it; how anomalous, how reactionary for us *not* to do it. But, as Anthony Burgess pointed out at the time, mathematically speaking duodecimal systems are more flexible. Twelve divides by two, three, four and six. Ten will divide by only five and two. It was also vaguely implied that since continental Europe had a good growth-rate and decimal currency, lack of dots and calculation in tens might in some arcane way have contributed to our lack of dynamism. The currency we had was part of our identity. It made us different, and that difference, once treasured, was now seen as an anti-social act towards what we amusingly call "our Community partners." Indeed, British difference and British identity seemed to be bitterly resented by the most fervent of the good Europeans, whose streak of spiritual quislingism competed with the worst instincts of those who had other fatherlands—in Soviet Russia or Mainland China. Orwell, again I'm afraid, returns to this argument with his doctrine of "transferred nationalism."

But transferred to what? Russophilia, however daft, has a long provenance. China is a great nation, however barbarised. But the dynamic men of the late 1960s and '70s who were so keen to heave us into the homogeniser, created the impression of trying to make Britain as far as possible resemble Belgium. No disrespect is intended by me to the southern part of the Low Countries, but Belgium (created in 1830) is the very model, down to the fact that it doesn't work very well, of an administrator's paradise.

Yet the precise people who wished us snipped and squared into an offshore Belgium were the first to lose their nerve when the first kilted ghoul snarled at them from a Scottish Nationalist platform. The Belgians, who have been around long enough to keep their heads about the mutual dis-esteem of Flemings and Walloons, would not have gone running as the entire consensus of received political opinion did here when the "Scot Nats", a truly unendearing body of men, won a few seats in Westminster. Panic is Whitehall's secret weapon, on which it

falls back when complacency has failed. A Scottish assembly with imprecise powers but without the right to levy taxes would have meant one of two things: a fraudulent, superfluous tier of government (or *ersatz* government) created to deceive and placate; or a step towards separatism, a separatism which would have gained momentum from concession and grievance from disappointment. Devolution was defeated by a congeries of non-consensual politicians from Teddy Taylor on the Tory Right by way of George Cunningham, now a Social Democrat, and Tam Dalyell, that flailing and abandoned Labour moderate, to Neil Kinnock in an hour of glory. The *Civitas Dei* of politics never doubted its wisdom, never hesitated in its urge to reduce Britain to the condition of chopped liver. That we have grown, functioned and had our victories as a unitary state did not receive notice. Devolution was another of those imitations, another political *ersatz*. Germany was federal, Italy had regional government. It was, as they say in the dreadful shame-making manifestos which political parties put out, "Time for a Change."

THE DEPRESSING THING about all the rather childish changes of the last fifteen years is their meaninglessness. Politicians have operated like the staff of a fussy purser on board not so much the *Titanic* as the flagship of the Ancient Mariner. Here, however, no albatrosses need alight; we roll our own. Accordingly we have earnest, thrusting activity within a painted ship upon a painted ocean. For despite the footling dynamism of such people, Britain continues her quiet, grinding course of measured, secular decline, but with this difference; that we keep losing small parts of our map.

There is nothing in which frustrated, impotent men dressed in a little brief authority will not meddle. Take names. What does one make for instance of Amber Valley, Broxbourne, Castle Point, Delyn, Elmet, Gravesham, Halton, Hyndburn, Monklands East and West, Ravensbourne, Teignbridge and Wyre Forest? They sound to me like characters and locations from a new soap opera. Young Ted Hyndburn is the salt of the earth but you can't rely on that fly operator Jason Delyn, a dodgy character with a past, who has his eye on young Sandra Broxbourne who has come to live at Castle Point, that rather fine house on the coast, not far from Wyre Forest. But her uncle Sir Charles Ravensbourne sees the solid worth of Young Ted and has set a private detective, rock-jawed, resolute Jake Elmet, to make enquiries into Jason's past. These bring him to the Colorado mining camp Monklands, in the once beautiful but now lead-polluted Amber Valley. . . . (More next week.) Why, one asks, must the Boundary Commissioners identify the shuffled and repointed constituencies with names which are meaningless, except in the occasional antiquarian sense, to the citizen? Hyndburn, for heaven's sake, is a tarted-up word for greater Accrington! What good will it do to a slightly battered brick-making town in Lancashire to have some verbal interior decorator give it a lick of paint and an alias? Hidden within the ranks of the British Civil Service there are evidently avid readers of romantic novels of the pastel-Gothic sort—witness Ravensbourne—and also men with a nostalgia deeper than my own. I simply have this soft spot for 1965; the chaps who renamed the municipality of Halifax as "Kirklees", out of

deference to the Robin Hood legend, have a passionate yearning to get back into the snug 15th century. Indeed, although it is customary to blame Mr Peter Walker for the massacre of local identity in his Local Government Act of 1973 this is less than fair. Dearly as I lament the obligation to be nice to Mr Walker (not my favourite politician), it has to be said that his version of municipal boundaries and names, bad as it was, was solidly conservatory compared with the Redcliffe-Maud Commission advising him. Mr Walker simply dispatched to oblivion Rutland, Huntingdon, and a county peculiarly dear to this writer, Westmorland, as well as meddlesomely chopping bits off the others and taking it upon himself, a mere ex-partner in Slater Walker Securities, to liquidate the Ridings of Yorkshire which antedate the Conquest. But the Maud Commission, God bless it, was all ready for the creation of six or seven regional sub-states, nameless lumps of geographical Lego to most people, but not without some inspiration from the Anglo-Saxon heptarchy.

INCIDENTALLY, THOSE WHO carry out pottering changes on the face of Britain are very happy to indulge in a vast verbal inflation of their own titles. The rot set in here with Harold Wilson, now suitably if inadequately translated as Lord Wilson of Rievaulx. Harold Wilson it was, in his kindly way, who, after Barbara Castle had been badly thrown over trade-union reform, tried rather touchingly to make it up to her with a grander and more resonating title to go with her diminished status. The old Ministry of Labour which had been good enough for Ernest Bevin, ruling it like a benevolent Stalin, was now frothed up into the Department of Employment and Productivity, and poor done-in-the-eye Mrs Castle became a full three-star Secretary of State with epaulets. It set a pattern which has continued unbroken down to Mrs Thatcher who actually turned Transport, least esteemed and sought-after of jobs, the chipped off corner of another Ministry, into a full-blown Department with a Secretary of State. Housing and Local Government with Transport added long ago became the Environment (Department of), a piece of '70s chic. But once separate, even Transport, even the present Minister, that stylish disaster, Nicholas Ridley, has to be a Secretary of State.

As for the Board of Trade and its President (a nice Victorian title), office, name and size change with the tides; while the Ministry of Power is now the Department of Energy. All have won and all shall have prizes. The ranking of Ministers is reminiscent of the tendency in schools (which soon surely must become Education Centres) not to distinguish *alpha* from *beta* and to award (until the day before yesterday) passes so coded that only the very discerning can recognise them for failures.

I THINK I SHALL BELIEVE in the true seriousness of a Government when it demotes its Ministers to their true rank, when the glorious train of subordinates is diminished and its grandeur clipped. A nice story is told by one of Mrs Thatcher's Ministers whose chauffeuse had talent-spotted him over the head of an elder statesman as a man likely soon to grade himself (and her) up by getting into the Cabinet

and winning for her the mark of such elevation—a Daimler Sovereign. “Well”, she demanded after the crucial Downing Street interview, “did you get it?” “Yes”, he said, “I’m going to transfer to. . . .” “Never mind about the Department”, said the lady, “it’s the *Daimler* I’m interested in.” Defeat appears to have sharpened our appetites for the small change of office-holding—large cars and china cups. Civil servants wisely tend always to say “Secretary of State” in the vocative person—so much more soothing than “Mr Harris”, and so fatuously Habsburg in every other respect.

However, not every disaster which has hacked away at us as a country latterly can be directly attributed to politicians. Part of the fair fatherland which, like Heine, I once had, was its language. It is not the fault of politicians if the Bible, which made the blood of that language run red, has been translated and retranslated into a sort of prose muesli, all second person plural and tin-eared. Try reading *Ecclesiastes* in the “Good News” version if you want creative dissonance, or if, for that matter, you want the banality of a straight talk to young men. Nothing in the several British (but hardly English) versions has quite the splendid absurdity of the American text which amended “*And Saul went into the cave and covered his feet*” as “*And Saul went into the cave and went to the bathroom.*” They lack that sort of atrocious grandeur. But nothing resonates, the poetry is gone and no birds sing.

The custodians of what is left of Christianity, a highly residual faith in Britain, have consigned the language of Tyndale, Coverdale, Lancelot Andrewes and his co-adjutors to demoted marginality. They cannot have too little of it. Their text is intended for (and comes from) drab minds with no sense of time past or cadence. 16th- to 17th-century English is too hard, too demanding. So they have produced a text which is as little demanding as strained carrot! The Babyfood Bible has now been followed with the realisation of a spectre which has been haunting some of us rather more than any conjuration of Marx (who would have been as appalled as anybody): I mean a simplified, toned-down and modernised Shakespeare. Poor bare forked creatures as we are, we might have been spared this. Worse, it is seen by its progenitor, the inescapable Dr Rowse, as an act of pre-emption. Worse would have happened, he tells us, but for his own clarifying text. The present generation, especially in America, cannot understand Shakespeare, he says. I detect here a wholesome lusting after dollars which at the present rate of exchange is most politic. But if the past and High English are beyond the present generation, what does that say for the mental energy and intellectual fidelity of the elder generation who raised them? You have texts, you work, you come to understand. It isn’t actually very difficult, any more than it was difficult for someone with an atom of energy or sensibility to understand the King James Bible. And like all acts of pre-emption this miserable text *won’t* pre-empt. A thoroughly modern, probably socially aware and relevant Shakespeare must be only a matter of months away.

IDENTITY IN A PEOPLE is a good thing. Names, words, texts, titles, the places where we live are all part of it. They can only be changed out of a sort of crassness or an active malice. The

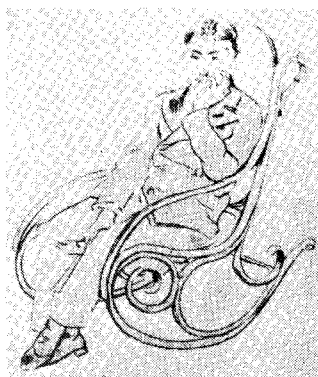
designators of new boroughs are not malicious. Indeed, they often act out of a spirit of rather touching (if meddling) antiquarianism—Kirklees and the medieval sub-principalities of Wales, Powys and Gwent, that sort of thing—but the Euro-faddists have always imported a hint of dislike for this country into their discourse. There is a trace of voluntary subjection, of happy tribute-paying, in their Belgianising tendencies. Panic begot the abortion of devolution; vanity and self-solace among unsuccessful men in office started the bubble-titles of Ministers. But the rending (and I mean rending, in its Old Testament sense) of the Bible and the dilution of Shakespeare with Dr Rowse's water are acts of hubris mixed with malice.

This age has exalted the commonplace. Let us find whatever is not commonplace and bring it into low and level conformity. We had a source of rich communication, and this age speaks in obscenities and grunts with a vocabulary derelict of elegance or substance. Let that source dry up and diminish. Cathedrals are out, industrial building methods are in. As the old-hat Bible hath it: "God maketh man upright but they have sought out many inventions. . . ."

A Lucky Couple

Marcel & Céleste

By Derwent May



IN THE SPRING of this year there died, at the age of 93, the woman who saw more of Proust than anyone else in the last eight years of his life—Céleste Albarét, whose first task for him as his young housekeeper was to deliver the complimentary copies of *Du côté de chez Swann*, and whose last was to nurse him day and night through his mortal illness. Céleste was the wife of

Proust's regular taxi-driver, Odilon Albarét—not the taxi-driver Agostinelli whose beauty so intoxicated Proust and who lent some of his traits to Albertine, but Agostinelli's more workaday successor. Céleste moved into Proust's flat at 102 Boulevard Haussmann at the beginning of the First World War, when her husband was called up. She was soon utterly absorbed into the strange programme of his days—taking him his breakfast coffee and croissants in bed in the early afternoon, making his phone-calls and delivering his endless letters, and helping him to get ready on the nights when he got up and went out to see his friends at their houses or in the Ritz

Hotel. She eventually fell into the habit of waiting till he came home, at three or four in the morning, then sitting by his bed while he described the night's comedy and drama for her. She had to learn to go to sleep while the world was waking up—though she sometimes wondered if Proust ever slept at all, and wasn't working away in his bed again, still indefatigably expanding the later volumes of his book, after his nocturnal outings.

All his friends came to know her, as his intermediary or as the tall, elegant dragon who kept them out when he didn't want to be disturbed. All of them who have written about Proust seem to have admired her greatly. Léon Pierre-Quint, writing in 1925, three years after Proust's death, already describes Céleste as "this housekeeper who was *aussi étonnante que son maître*."

But what did these two astonishing people make of each other?

Céleste talked, over the years, to various people who were writing memoirs of Proust; but it was only eleven years ago that she gave a full account of her life with him. A French journalist, Georges Belmont, got her to talk into a tape-recorder for a total of 72 hours, and out of her words he shaped a book, *Monsieur Proust*, which was published in France (by Robert Laffont) in 1973 and in English translation (by Collins-Harvill) in 1976.

One fact above all stands out in these memories: that she was entranced by Proust. Fifty years after his death she was still speaking of him in the incontrovertibly authentic tones of devotion. At first she was awed by his bizarre way of life, and the haunting silence of the flat—a reaction beautifully brought out in the German film of her story, *Céleste*, made by the director Percy Adlon in 1981. (Some of the early scenes in the film have all the bewitching stillness of a Vermeer, alluding simultaneously to Céleste's emotions about the Boulevard Haussmann, and to one of Proust's greatest objects of devotion in these last years.)

But she soon lost her shyness, and began to learn how to tease or even chide her employer, in a way that evidently pleased him. And so they settled into a kind of intimacy over the bedclothes, among the clouds of anti-asthma smoke, in which Proust seems to have talked to her about himself as much as he ever did to family, friends or lovers.

STILL SHE REMAINED an uncompromising hero-worshipper. Professor J. M. Cocking has said, very aptly, that throughout most of her book she portrays Proust as "a shadowy compact of magician and Sun King." She defends him firmly against all sorts of supposed slights or slanders, and is proud of being able to put the record straight. For instance, she is convinced that André Gide never opened the manuscript of *Du côté de chez Swann* when it was submitted to him at the *Nouvelle Revue Française*; and she gives as her evidence not (as George Painter says in his biography) the fact that she recognised her own knot on the parcel when it was returned, but the far more convincing fact—if she is right—that Proust and his valet Nicolas both recognised the untied knot—for it was Nicolas who had done the parcel up, and he was "something of an artist in knots."

She is scornful about many extravagant assertions that have

been made concerning the night performance of César Franck's music in Proust's flat by the Poulet quartet. Earlier biographers have claimed that Proust himself went to fetch the musicians, lying under an eiderdown in the taxi and eating as he went from a tureen of potato purée. She denies that he went. "As for the steaming tureen", she states categorically, "that's ridiculous. Proust never ate purée!" In fact, she hates any tale that casts doubt on Proust's dignity, and though she admits that he told her about his visits to the male brothel to watch flagellation going on, she is convinced he only went for the sake of his novel, and will hear nothing of such stories as his pleasure in sticking pins into rats.

What the truth is about those matters we shall probably never know; still, it is clear that Céleste's devotion to Proust means that we cannot automatically accept all that she says. Her devotion was possessive, and she obviously wanted to believe that his dependence on her in the domestic sphere was practically total. She says that he lived almost entirely on the coffee and hot milk that she brought him, for the last few years of his life. But we see from his rich correspondence of that time that he was often drinking and dining well at the Ritz late at night. This was, perhaps, a detail of his nights out that Proust suppressed in order to please Céleste.

We must also hesitate to put too much credence in what she remembered about his friends and acquaintances. One well-known story about Proust is shown in a new light in the fourth volume of Henry James's letters, which has recently been published. As the editor, Leon Edel, writes:

"George D. Painter, in the second volume of his life of Proust, says that Henry James wrote Proust 'a magnificent letter, informing him that this was an extraordinary book'. The letter has never been found, and word of its existence appears to be apocryphal. Lucien Daudet and Logan Pearsall Smith are two other sources for its existence, but talking to them both long ago convinced me their recollections were based on the same apocryphal evidence. Painter confirmed to me that he had heard of the letter at second hand. Further information suggested that the information came from Proust's celebrated domestic, Céleste Albaret, who seems to have told Mina Curtiss about this letter—but who in doing so confused Henry James with the French poet Francis Jammes. . . ."

WHAT WAS PROUST thinking all this time about Céleste? There seems no doubt at all that he liked her and was grateful for her care of him. Her book is as convincing about his kindness to her as it is about her devotion to him. But he has also given us a vivid account of her from his own pen.

One of the most important ways in which Céleste helped him when he was near to finishing *A la recherche* was her idea for inserting his additions into his manuscript exercise books, when the margins were full. She suggested that he should write on pieces of paper with a broad margin at the top and bottom, and she would stick them on to the right page of the book, and then, if there were more, on to each other. One strip ended up

four-and-a-half feet long. He told her (she says): "You have saved my life."

What she did not fully realise at the time was that one such long addition was a portrait of her, under her own name. The episode is a wonderful illustration of the way Proust could import material into his book, often very close to the original in life, and yet transform it into something wholly apposite to all the many themes of the book, enriching and expanding those in a wholly natural way.

Proust introduces Céleste, along with her sister Marie (who later came to help her in the flat) as a pair of young servant girls staying with their employer, an old foreign lady, in the hotel at Balbec. They quickly strike up a friendship with the young Marcel; he goes to talk to them in their room at the top of the hotel, and they sometimes visit him, always chaperoning each other, when he is still lying in bed in the morning. (How skilfully Proust makes use of those bedroom conversations of his later life!)

The episode is preceded, and led into, by an account of the old homosexual, Nissim Bernard, who pursues young waiters down into the basement of the hotel—and Proust gets some good, characteristic, comic irony out of the way in which the hotel manager turns a blind eye to the goings-on of M. Bernard, while scolding Marcel for this friendship with the girls which was "as strong as it was pure." In fact the whole scene is like a burst of freshness and innocence into the world of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Céleste and Marie treat the young Marcel like a spoilt child, with Céleste, especially, teasing him about his spendthrift ways and dandyism, in wonderfully vigorous, inventive language:

"I don't know what your mother was thinking of when she made you, you're just like a bird. Look, Marie, wouldn't you say he was preening his feathers, and the supple way he turns his head right round, he looks so light, you'd think he was just learning to fly. . . . There, Marie, look at him sipping his milk with a reverence that makes me want to say my prayers. . . ."

This is the main note in Proust's portrait of Céleste, and it links her directly with an aspect—finally, the one redeeming aspect—of the Duchesse de Guermantes. Of the Duchesse, hundreds of pages earlier in the book, Proust has said that when she speaks there is a harsh, ancient, rural savour in the sounds, combined with a purity of vocabulary "that might have been used by an old French writer." It was almost like listening to an old song, while seeing, "imprisoned in the perpetual afternoon of her eyes, a sky of the Ile-de-France or Champagne spread itself, grey-blue, oblique."

Now Proust speaks in almost exactly the same terms of Céleste's language, its "curious genius", its "strange, personal poetry", and he adds, in the same way, a connection with her physical being:

"I believe that Céleste, not only in her bursts of fury, but also in her hours of depression, preserved the rhythm of her native streams. When she was exhausted, it was after their fashion; she had literally run dry. Nothing could then have revitalised her. Then all of a sudden the circulation was restored in her tall, slender, magnificent body. The water

flowed in the opaline transparence of her bluish skin. She smiled in the sun and became bluer still. At such moments she was truly celestial."

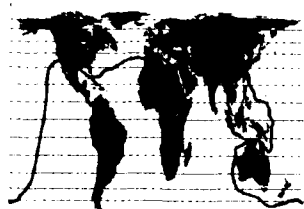
After this, the book turns deftly to thoughts of two other girls in the hotel, who are flagrant and exhibitionist Lesbians, and so on again to Marcel's suspicions of Albertine's interest in women; and the novel darkens once more. The Céleste episode slips away into the novel's turbulent and complex stream of feelings and ideas; but it has added yet another inimitable moment of glittering truth. (Proust also included a few details from Céleste's life in his portrait of the older servant, Françoise; but Françoise was already a fully-conceived

character in *Du côté de chez Swann*, which was published before Proust met Céleste.)

Marcel and Céleste were lucky in each other. Marcel, in his final mention of Céleste in the novel, describes how she and Marie wept when he left the hotel at Balbec—but "I dare say they had forgotten my existence by that evening." We have seen how little she forgot, and how she rendered thanks. Perhaps Proust's deepest homage to her is, in his way, an implicit one, going even beyond his comparison of her with the Duchesse de Guermantes. There are only two characters in *À la recherche* who are given substantial imaginary parts under the name of their original in the world. One of them is Céleste, his servant; the other is the Queen of Naples.

Do Ideas Matter?

Peter Bauer's Polemical Problems—By JOHN WOOD



DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ought to give up "development economics": it damages their wealth. It was a tragedy for so many Third World countries that they became independent while the reputation of ortho-

dox economics, and the understanding of how markets work and what they can do were at their nadir. Since opinion in the West in those days was almost universally hostile to market economics, Third World countries can hardly be blamed for allowing themselves to be persuaded (entirely by Western economists) that orthodox theory was simply irrelevant to their circumstances, and that what they needed was a special brand, which has come to be known as "development economics."¹ This collection of random notions, recently described as "the *dirigiste* dogma" (Deepak Lal), superseded, ignored or defied most of the laws of what had hitherto been accepted as "economics", and has proved to be a cul-de-sac. No country which has entered it can claim economic success; many have even suffered economic decline.

By turning their backs on market mechanisms, poor countries simply added to their difficulties. Without prices there can be no signposts to point out that this rather than that kind of economic activity should be pursued; no way to register preferences (even poor people have them); no guidance about how to allocate resources; in short, nothing to indicate how the economy should develop . . . and all touch with reality is lost.

Instead, the adoption of the propositions of "development economics" has led to state intervention in varying degrees,

often up to comprehensive central economic planning. To carry out the objectives of such policies requires not only detailed regulation and controls, but continuous exhortation, too. All the more so as development economists assume that since poor people are too stupid to respond to relative prices, intense public-relations exercises have to be undertaken by local politicians, visiting academics, and international civil servants, in a massive attempt to bring about economic growth, through rhetoric.

It is this contrast between the *reality* of the market-place and the *rhetoric* of government which gives Peter Bauer the title of his latest book (a collection of ten essays, some of which have been published before).² Most of the essays take further themes already familiar from earlier writings, but two chapters reflecting on the state of economics strike a new, or rather a more pronounced, note of pessimism. Lord Bauer has come to question what liberals have perhaps too easily taken for granted—whether it really is true that ideas play the dominant role in shaping society. In the light of his extensive studies of development problems over the last 40 years, which appear to him to have had so little impact on policy, it is not difficult to see why the question is put.

FOR MOST PEOPLE the "Third World" is still made up of a group of homogeneous countries all of which are caught in a vicious circle of poverty, forcing them to depend on the West for free capital (foreign aid) needed to invest in heavy industry (preferably) or manufacturing (as a second best) or agriculture (only as a last resort). Comprehensive central economic planning is, of course, the *sine qua non* of progress. Because the scale of foreign aid has been so inadequate, however, the gap between rich and poor countries is incessantly "widening." But an increase in the latter's foreign trade would not help to narrow it, especially if it were to be brought about by those selfish multinational companies. Indeed external contacts

¹ See, in *ENCOUNTER*, the prophetic article by the late Professor Harry Johnson, "A Word to the Third World" (October, 1971).

² *Reality and Rhetoric*. By P. T. BAUER. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £11.95; Harvard University Press, \$15.00.

generally may be unhelpful (except in so far as they are needed to negotiate further foreign aid).

Such a description has come to be the accepted picture of the Third World for those who make policy (and even more so for those who would like to, e.g. the signatories of the Brandt Report). Each one of the propositions is untrue, as Peter Bauer has for long argued, and taken together the whole makes up a world which exists merely in the imagination. What gives the caricature its importance is precisely that it is so widely accepted. And it is accepted because it suits those in authority to do so. After all, there *are* beneficiaries of foreign aid; but they are not the mass of the people in poor countries.

This conflict, and the general popularity and prestige still enjoyed by "development economics", in spite of its continued failure to lift the standard of life of the poor, challenges the assumption that above everything else it is ideas that matter, and suggests that other forces must be at work.

LORD BAUER QUOTES the famous passage towards the end of the *General Theory* where Keynes writes of the world being ruled by little else "than the ideas of economists and political philosophers", and comments:

"Welcome as it may be to the interests of economists and to their *amour propre*, Keynes' position is clearly untenable. For instance, most economists since Adam Smith, including Keynes, have advocated free trade, but this has not brought it about. Keynes' inadequate and parochial formulation neglects not only the influence of vested interests but also that of religious, spiritual and ideological forces. . . ."

Is there a clue in the last two lines which would explain why criticisms of existing ideas about the Third World have gained so little ground, and why rhetoric seems to continue to triumph over reality? The clue is unfortunately ambiguous. Lord Bauer, for instance, can hardly be accused of overlooking "religious, spiritual and ideological forces." On the contrary, their importance has always been a central theme of his writings, and is considered again in this book, particularly in the chapter on "Ecclesiastical Economics: Envy Legitimized."

The impact of religious, spiritual, and ideological forces in shaping human attitudes that may either encourage or inhibit economic progress is as close to the heart of the matter as it is possible to be. During those long years when backward countries were discussed largely in statistical terms, even though their national income accounts were, for the most part, figures of fun, and their incremental "capital output ratios" (to exhume a once favourite tool of the planners) a farce—it was always refreshing to hear Professor Bauer stress that these countries were made up not of units, but of people, some with better developed aptitudes for commercial life than others.

Nor has Peter Bauer neglected the importance of vested interests. He is, of course, well aware that if the price mechanism is not allowed to function, then bureaucracy has to be introduced as the unavoidable substitute. Hostility to the market order soon builds up formidable groups with interests "vested" in "development economics." It leads to the glorification of the role of government as the preferred agent of

economic change, which inevitably politicises life in these countries. Businessmen and traders depend for a livelihood on their applications for import quotas, export licences, foreign exchange allocations being granted; and this naturally elevates politicians and civil servants into positions of great power. The imbalance is increased by the *nature* of foreign aid, which is given to *governments* (bureaucrats) to distribute. Any attempt to dismantle the machinery of government created for "development economics" would be resisted by the establishments in most Third World countries, and by their opposite numbers in the West—officials from government, academics in development institutes, and of course thousands of staff in the United Nations and related agencies (IDA, UNCTAD, OAS, some parts of the World Bank, etc.) who have no role to play except that created for them by "development economics."

To analyse the problem along these lines—pointing to the conflict between what civil servants are thought to be doing (working in the "national interest") and what they are really doing (working in their own interests)—is today a commonplace of the economics of politics, or theory of public choice. Peter Bauer has for long drawn attention to this conflict, but not in the language of the public-choice theorists. It is almost as if, like M. Jourdain, he has without realising it been speaking public-choice theory all his life.

But if the importance of "vested interests" and "religious, spiritual and ideological forces" has been sufficiently acknowledged to avoid the trap of Keynes' "inadequate and parochial formulation", and rhetoric still remains more

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influential than reality, what else, if anything, can be done? How are ideas ever to be made effective in a world in which scholarship and persuasion seem to be no match for statecraft and pressure groups?

IT WOULD BE TEMPTING TO IMITATE the strategy which has apparently served "development economics" so well, and to create counter-interest groups of those who would benefit from the introduction of market policies. That implies that the scholar must do more than put forward his ideas, he must also work up his own constituency of special-interest groups if he is ever going to prevail. Many would find this distasteful, and in any case it would be difficult to do; successful interest-groups are a feature of *dirigiste*, not of free economies, and for a good reason. There is an asymmetry between the nature of the market and the non-market order which Lord Bauer examines in "Market Order and State Planning." The obvious contrast is that

"The market system delivers the goods people want, but those who make it work cannot readily explain why it does so. The socialist or communist system does not deliver the goods, but those who operate it can readily explain away its failure."

A further contrast is that the benefits of any move towards the former will be widely spread over the mass of the people (in

the provinces, up-river, in the interior), whereas the costs, the disturbance, and the losses in wealth and status will be concentrated on the articulate few—largely the politicians and officials in the capital cities, already protected by their groups. There is thus an impasse. A real improvement in the standard of life of the poor can take place only by embracing the market order, which can only be introduced by those whose interests it will not enhance, as they are well aware.

Is there ultimately any alternative to the establishment of a climate of opinion which clearly understands this contrast and firmly believes that a market order is preferable to any other? To create that climate against the power which special interests have to orchestrate the rhetoric of a society remains the challenge; ideas still matter.

"Truth may be great and will perhaps prevail", Lord Bauer writes, adding sceptically that "Scholars at any rate must act as if they believed both parts of this statement." As Donne realised, to seek and to maintain the truth is not impossible, but it is laborious:

*On a huge hill
Cragged and steep, Truth stands, and hee that will
Reach her, about must, and about must goe;
And what the hills suddennes resists, winne so. . . .*

For many years, and in many books, Lord Bauer has gone about more than most of us.

We Learn within Chance Walls

We learn within chance walls the information of desire.
Unique, our coming to the knowledge, our trying, taking.
This built room makes us children in the grasp of our demand.
Regards our whispered bargains, neutrally.

In parallel, unspoken progress through sensation
Couples move. Rooms are made to cradle and legitimise
The act which lifts you clear of all control, all rationale.
Its partnership in violence, in delight.

It is its own language. Whatever we learn there,
That territory's bywords, translate ill.
The public clues we offer are reluctant and oblique:
A way of sitting in a chair, a smile.

So, is the curiosity we feel for others' lust
Felt by them for ours? Some good space stands between us.
We gain within chance walls our fleshly understanding
Murmured in sweet code, unrepeatable.

John Richmond

BOOKS & WRITERS

An Unofficial Life

On *T. S. Eliot*—By *PHILIP LARKIN*



TO CONTEMP-
plate writing
a life of T. S.

Eliot is to face the fact at the outset that Eliot did not want his life to be written, and that his friends and relations are loyally cooperating by not giving permissions in order to make it as difficult as possible for anyone who tries. The retort

scholarly is that al-

though Eliot was a great poet, he was a notoriously enigmatic one, and that if by writing his biography these enigmas can be solved we are surely in honour bound to make the attempt. But here we come up against Eliot himself: "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates." Whoever has the temerity to proceed, therefore, is triply engaged: to disinter and disentangle the life, without the assistances normally afforded; to relate it, in the teeth of an explicit denial by its subject that such relation is possible, to the impenetrable poems; and to justify these audacities by rendering them less impenetrable than they otherwise would be.

Many would give up at this point—some, even, feeling it indelicate to persist in something that those most nearly concerned did not want done. Others, more practically, might argue that to write a biography with one hand tied behind you will lead to failure and is not worth doing. To be forbidden to quote from unpublished writings, or even from published ones "except for the purpose of fair comment in a critical context", makes it impossible to say, for instance, "Compare this unpublished letter with that published poem", and in such circumstances what becomes of the defence that an unauthorised life is all right if it elucidates the hitherto-obscure work? Subsidiary excuses may be called in to shore it up: "Got to be a life some time"; "Been dead nearly twenty years"; "Only be muck-

raking otherwise"; trailing off into disaffected mutterings such as "Why are they so cagey—must be something there" and "Bound to go like a bomb."

A tall order; but whatever the magnitude, or the enormity, of the task, Peter Ackroyd has done it, and it must be said at the outset that Eliot could not have had a more respectful biographer.¹ There is no seeking after sensation; even when relating something surprising (such as that Eliot powdered his face green in 1922, or that Mary Trevelyan proposed marriage to him in 1949), Ackroyd does so in a way that suggests that, all things considered, it was only what might have been expected. The manuscript sources he acknowledges are extensive, as is the list of individuals who have helped him; the thoroughness of his method is impressive. Yet the life he outlines is not substantially different from what we already know: the serious, intellectually dandiacal young American philosopher, the disastrous marriage and its painful, long-drawn-out consequences, the retreat into drab and penitential Anglicanism, and the finale of international acclaim, the fashionable theatre, happiness in a second marriage. For despite the justifiable claim this book can make to be the most detailed account so far of Eliot's life, it is by no means the first; Ackroyd's appendix of biographies, memoirs, reminiscences and the like underlines how much has been said already. Truly it is not much use trying to put people off.

Even though there are advantages in being an "unauthorised" biographer, therefore, in that one is not committed to any "official" viewpoint, Ackroyd's account brings out what such a viewpoint would entail. Despite his well-known evasiveness, Eliot had a determined toughness that enabled him to give up both his country and his family, though sincerely attached to both; however bitter his misfortunes, he never contemplated returning to either. He was an enormously hard worker, even if it made him ill; first as a full-time bank employee, then as a publisher, in both cases coming home in the evening to edit *The Criterion* (1922-1939), write articles and reviews, and somehow produce his own poems. The illness, indeed, seems to have been almost a chronic condition: Eliot was never completely well. If it was not influenza or bronchitis, it was various manifestations of stress, producing symptoms of tachycardia, or phobias about lifts or large dogs. But the hard work was evidence of another trait: responsibility. Knowing that his inheritance from his father (who died in 1919) would revert at his own death, he remained in his Lloyds Bank job

¹ *T. S. Eliot*. By PETER ACKROYD. Hamish Hamilton, £12.50.

even when it became insupportable through other commitments because it would provide a pension for his wife. He paid her many doctors' bills, and presumably all or part of her keep at the sanatorium to which she was committed in 1938. Though they were separated, he remained faithful to her. She died in 1947.

At the same time, he was curiously indecisive, or bad at knowing what was best for him. "I have never been wise", he said late in life. He persisted as an academic philosopher throughout his twenties, abandoning his Harvard doctorate in 1916. His marriage to Vivien Haigh-Wood within a few weeks of meeting her in 1915 was not only an appalling blunder but completely out of character, although Ackroyd makes out a case that Eliot had reached a state of mind when something of the sort was inevitable (one remembers his remark quoted in Lyndall Gordon's excellent *Eliot's Early Years* to the effect that it is better to do wrong than to do nothing). He shrank from discharging disagreeable personal obligations—instructing Ezra Pound to write to his father after the unannounced wedding; serving a notice of separation on Vivien while he himself was in America (she had decorated their flat against his return); deserting his flatmate John Hayward virtually without warning when he married again in 1957 (Ackroyd analyses the relation at length, without excusing the desertion). Eliot learned to handle people in his own way, but it was an aloof and uncommitted way; divesting oneself of the love of created beings naturally appealed to one who had experienced what love of them could lead to, and he tended to

keep such created beings as he knew separate from each other and even from himself.

BUT THERE WERE compartments in Eliot too: "A company of actors inside one suit", was V. S. Pritchett's description of him, a telling one that Ackroyd quotes twice; Edmund Wilson, meeting him in 1933, concluded that his personality was "really rather incoherent", and calls him "a self-invented character." Ackroyd sees him as "a master of protective camouflage." Bertrand Russell commented, after teaching a class that included Eliot in 1914, that "window-dressing seems irresistible to Americans", which might be applied to the array of references that make up the notes to *The Waste Land*, designed to impress rather than illuminate, a technique Eliot sometimes employed in his earlier criticism. Philosopher, scholar; to these personae can be added the English clubman, the churchwarden (which Eliot himself likened to a practical joke), and the reputation for a kind of rarified piety that provoked, in a competition for "dull BBC radio programmes", the prize-winning entry "11.0-11.15: Mr T. S. Eliot will meditate in the studio."

All this falls into place if we consider one of Ackroyd's most striking comments: "it may emerge that Eliot's poetry was the real English drama of the twentieth century." For the oddest thing about an admittedly odd life was his turning from poetry in order to write what he clearly hoped would be popular West End plays; if we buy his collected works, we find that nearly two-thirds of it is in dramatic form, and his first two major poems were dramatic monologues. Clearly the drama, for Eliot, was not only a way of life but a way of literature. His best lines have the dramatic projection that he excitedly discovered in Shakespeare's contemporaries, like brilliant film-shots. Of course, in a sense all good literature is drama—"Dramatise, dramatise", said Henry James—in so far as it is designed to produce a deliberate effect on the reader; but the montage of Eliot's method was more deliberate than most. Indeed, his besetting temptation, as Ackroyd points out, was to make drama of drama—to assimilate the impression of other writers' forms and language within an original design. A case could be made for calling Eliot a synthetic writer, and his mind "a piece of elaborate machinery run on a very rare and expensive fuel"—that fuel being all that had been written up to the moment of his own creations.

THIS IS THE NEAREST Ackroyd gets to establishing a connection between the life and the work, and it is perhaps not very near. His last paragraphs restate the contradictions and paradoxes of Eliot's life and temperament that in his *Prelude* he sets out to solve (in his end, one might say, is his beginning); he has documented them, described them, prowled round them with endless patience, but in the last analysis he has not explained them.

Is it ungrateful to feel relieved? If Eliot wished to live quietly, succeeding in avoiding notice, living and partly living, without making his life a continual allegory, then he had a right to. There was pain, there was dignity, finally there was happiness. Let it go at that.



RACE AND THE MEDIA

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Ezra Pound & Treason

The National Skeleton—By MALCOLM BRADBURY

"... it is only prudent that we Americans should from time to time remind ourselves that one room in St Elizabeths' is a closet which contains a national skeleton."

Commonweal (1955)



SOME TIME over the winter of 1955-56, just like many another industrious thesis-writer working on Modernism in early 20th-century literature, I paid a visit to Ezra Pound during his detention in St Elizabeth's Hospital, Washington, D.C., across the Potomac River from the centres of government and justice. Pound had been held there since 1945, unfit to plead on many charges of treason.

Pound's visitors were screened, largely to keep out the enquiring press, by Dr Winfred Overholser, a leading American psychologist and superintendent of the hospital, and by Pound himself; I had an academic introduction. Pound's visitors were received during summer-time out in the grounds, and in winter in what, my notes tell me, was called the North Building of the hospital, an immense group of buildings in institutional gothic.

I went up a flight of stone steps, rang a bell, and the door was unlocked by a black attendant who immediately locked it behind me. Inside I found a long wide corridor filled with inmates who were watching television, and who waved, nodded, and smiled at me. A number of small rooms, furnished with bed, chair and table, gave on to this corridor. In one of these, particularly packed with papers, I found Pound. He arranged the interview, as with other visitors, by barricading a window alcove on the corridor with deckchairs, and then setting two chairs inside the barricade for our discussion. A crowd of watchers gathered beyond the makeshift wall, and waved and interrupted during the three-hour talk.

I was after old stuff, information about the London literary scene before World War I, when Pound was the central figure in the explosion of what came to be called "the New Arts." He gave me these recollections and details with clear memory, assertive and often generous judgments, and that familiar and distinctive note of megalomania that everyone who knew him had long identified, though it is not rare among those with great reputations. He still talked of the centrality of economics, explained that he was writing the last ten *Cantos* (the project

changed thereafter), and promised that those who found them without plan would be confounded when the work was complete. He regularly emphasised his long literary poverty and clearly felt it a major injustice. And he also said: "I seem to be born to be jailed."

Though he had recently passed his 70th birthday, he still remained very like the famous Wyndham Lewis drawing: his profile sharp and vigorous, his beard, drawn into three grey points, thrust powerfully forward. His clothes, matching brown shirt and bermuda shorts, were carelessly worn in a kind of counter-dandyism; he was greatly energetic and seemed in excellent physical condition, save that his eyes seemed a little weak. The conversation was vigorous, valuable, and very much concerned with the accuracy of the record. At the end of three hours he seized a metal cup and plate and carried them off to the communal dining-room; the attendant unlocked the door and let me out. The experience was familiar (he received many such visitors) and left a familiar impression, best recorded by the German poet Rudolf Hagelstange, and reported in Dr E. Fuller Torrey's controversial new book, *The Roots of Treason*.¹

"Pound was the first insane poet with whom I have ever held a conversation, and the only genuinely insane thing about the conversation was that Pound was not insane."

Even at that date, when not all the facts were clear, it was generally assumed that Pound was imprisoned in the hospital not by his insanity but by a contradiction. If he were actually insane, then he should have been receiving treatment and facing the prospect of cure and release. If he were not, then he should have gone for trial on the indictments against him, and met the result: execution or imprisonment, clemency or acquittal. As *Life* magazine said of the endless comment surrounding the case, the position was "technically complicated." It would seem that earlier on the American government had refused his transfer to a private institution because it would "place him in a happier and more comfortable position", though afterwards, around the time of his release with indemnities in 1958, they did consider this possibility.

ALL THIS SUGGESTED that Pound's detention was regarded as a form of punishment, his insanity a polite and convenient legal fiction. It was also one of the many paradoxical situations surrounding his detention. As long as Pound was in St Elizabeth's, under the protection and (as Torrey's book now shows) the literary patronage of Dr Overholser, he could be held to be insane and therefore unfit to plead at a trial; and to the end this was maintained, with Overholser declaring him "permanently and incurably insane" on his release. But there was no statute of limitation on treason, and so release without

¹ *The Roots of Treason: Ezra Pound and the Secrets of St Elizabeth's*. By E. FULLER TORREY. Sidgwick & Jackson, £12.95, paper £8.95.

the imputation of continuing insanity could always have led to a trial and conviction, even after his long detention.

But, Torrey reminds us, the paradoxes went further. The period of that detention, with its permanent imputation that Pound was a traitor, was also the period in which Pound achieved a full recognition as a major modern poet. I saw him then (that was why I was there), and I still do see him, as many do, as a major and central figure of the Modern movement, whose importance lay not only in his own work but in that apparently selfless energy, that concerned support, that unremitting radical commitment, he gave to the achievement of modern artistic change and the promotion of those he judged to be its greatest voices. In general he was right. Joyce's *Ulysses*, Pound's as well as Eliot's *Waste Land*, and the early work of many of those poets we find in that main artery from Imagism would not be fully there without his devoted energy, support, and distillation of primary ideas.

POUND'S CASE LAY IN THE MIDDLE of the complexities of modern culture. He had many supportive friends, most of them fellow-writers who had known him throughout his lifetime. They campaigned persistently on his behalf, first to prevent him ever coming to trial, then to establish the centrality of his reputation (hence the contentious award of the Bollingen Prize to him in 1949), then to secure a release and a rehabilitation. It was just around the time of my visit that Ernest Hemingway, having been awarded the Nobel Prize in 1954, sought to secure the Prize for Pound, sent him some of his own award money, and spoke everywhere for his release. Pound was bitterly ungrateful, to the point where he appeared not to want release at all. Indeed he persistently hampered all such endeavours, demanding extreme favours and, on one occasion, "complete exoneration and a conversion of official America to the views he expressed on Rome Radio."

Unfit for Trial —

"THE DEFENDANT, now 60 years of age and in generally good physical condition, was a precocious student, specializing in literature. He has been a voluntary expatriate for nearly 40 years, living in England and France, and for the past 21 years in Italy, making an uncertain living by writing poetry and criticism. His poetry and literary criticism have achieved considerable recognition, but of recent years his preoccupation with monetary theories and economics has apparently obstructed his literary productivity. He has long been recognized as eccentric, querulous, and egocentric.

At the present time he exhibits extremely poor judgement as to his situation, its seriousness and the manner in which the charges are to be met. He insists that his broadcasts are not treasonable, but that all his radio activities have stemmed from his self-appointed mission to "save the Constitution." He is abnormally grandiose, is expansive and exuberant in manner, exhibiting pressure of speech, discursiveness, and distractibility.

In our opinion, with advancing years his personality, for many years abnormal, has undergone further distortion to the extent that he is now suffering from a paranoid state which renders him mentally unfit to advise properly with counsel or to participate intelligently and reasonably in his own defense. He is, in other words, insane and mentally unfit for trial, and is in need of care in a mental hospital."

Drs Gilbert, King, Muncie and Overholser
Letter to the court, 14 December 1945

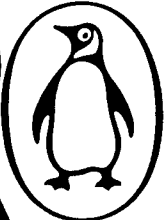
These friends were, of course, under no illusion about what Pound had done. They knew his terrifying bigotry, his racist passions, his continuing conviction of the justice of Fascism, and his enormous, sure egotism. A good number campaigned with him in personal correspondence for a change of mind, a regret. William Carlos Williams expressed a common feeling in writing: "No one forgives you for what you did, everyone forgives you for what you are"—though many of the American public could not see such a distinction. Williams also added that there comes a point in a man's opinions when he may lose his life for them; and one possible explanation of Pound's behaviour and attitude is that he regretted he had not, an attitude that may well have helped American legal circles feel that he was best not brought to trial.

But one fundamental aspect of their support was that they had been compatriots and co-fighters in that massive battle against American provincialism and philistinism, and in behalf of that radical, cosmopolitan new art that Pound himself had identified with an "American Risorgimento." It depended on what Henry James had called the "virtual quarrel with our own country", and above all on a view of the arts as avant-garde, the artist as a radical independent force. Artists, Pound had always urged, were aesthetically self-governing yet historically active: "Artists are the antennae of the race, though the bullet-headed many will never learn to trust their great artists."

But should they, and for what? Pound's avant-garde antennae were increasingly tuned to the signals he picked up from the *paiduma* of the great past world-cultures and sought to apply to the present and the future. But if the signals he was picking up from about 1930 on were an avant-garde justification, then didn't an unpleasant collusion exist between Modernism in art and the Fascist solutions to modern political and economic crisis, solutions that produced totalitarianism, racism, and Auschwitz? Pound saw himself as *the* great true reader, and not of the entire world artistic tradition, but of history and culture in the largest sense—that whole intricate complex of relations and exchange which makes a society either vital or dead. It was this that led him to presume to advise presidents and dictators, assume a world role, and so brought him to the Pisan gorilla cage and then to St Elizabeth's.

He even saw his own detention as part of the continuing battle with the bullet-headed many. In polemic, manifesto, and his verse, he fought with liberal history. The need was to Make It New; "It" was art, linguistic and perceptual clarity, and perhaps more than any of the American Modernists he made it explicit that art was an attempt to transcend historicism by decreating secular and material time. But society itself was to be a harmonious "superpositioning", like a poem, supporting the word, clarity and poetry by reuniting the economy of things, the currency, the culture. Pound pursued a vision which held on to art's centrality when the modern social order seemed to be making it redundant. And the aim was a great social recovery from fragmentation, a renewed transcendence or metamorphosis.

THIS VIEW OF THE POLITICS of culture has often been seen as crucial to Modernism. It certainly fed the post-War revolt against it, and the shift into liberal realism, freewheeling

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historicism, or confessionalism and subjectivism. Yet even as Modernism was being challenged and amended, it was being rediscovered as *the* essential early-20th-century art, and Pound was central. In fact Modernism had always been less a consent than an endless disagreement. But it had assaulted liberal history, asserted a powerful sense of modern crisis, and seen the artist as inward or actual expatriate, in a fundamental avant-garde dissent from the modern state and its dominant forms of organisation. Pound's treachery—the broadcasts supporting Fascism were real enough, and their bigotry and vitriol terrifying—was the outcome of a potent history. Pound's friends knew the great traitor was a great poet, the great poet a certain kind of traitor. They also knew the psychology of radical treachery that had fed the modern arts and helped create his blind and tragic psychology.

As Torrey says, Pound, generous in his help, had helped Eliot and Joyce, and Mussolini and Hitler; were the causes separable? Torrey is right to challenge two key myths about Pound: first that he was never *really* pro-Fascist or anti-Semite, and second that at some point he became insane. On present evidence neither stands up to inspection, though Torrey's reading simplifies the issues. Pound probably regretted the insanity plea—it must have suited many parties, probably including the US Government—but he was in crisis. The ironies accumulated. As long as he was held insane, Pound in self-protection firmly held on to his beliefs. And he certainly continued, in the seemingly impossible and depressing circumstances of St Elizabeth's (which Torrey makes seem far more attractive than they are), to write, with *The Cantos* incorporating his change of condition.

It was after his release that the full crisis came. As Torrey says: "One of the biggest ironies of Pound's life was that he spent over twelve perfectly sane years in an insane asylum, and then when he left became seriously depressed." *The Cantos* tailed off into an expression of their own incoherence ("... my errors and wrecks lie about me./And I am not a demigod,/I cannot make it cohere")—a potentially logical conclusion to that great enterprise in turning fragments into wholeness, and perhaps a more logical modern conclusion than the great celebration of the great counter-Imagist William Carlos Williams, in *Paterson*, which might be said to cohere by fiat. The world did not make sense or wholeness, and nor did Ezra Pound. Regrets and deep depression came, with the worst regret of all some words to a friend, which Torrey quotes: "Do what you can to save innocence. Stop this Pound influence from spreading."

IT IS PROBABLY because of all this that there is no "great" biography of Pound (as there is not only for almost all his major contemporaries, but for many far more trivial than he ever was), that his texts are still disordered, and his present reputation uncertain. Most of the records concentrate on the early period of his triumph, and a good deal remains obscure. This is why Dr Torrey's book needs to be welcomed, though it also needs to be challenged. It is not an anodyne biography, but a very controversial study which provides us with an analytical life of Pound and an informed

analysis of the means by which he was "protected" from trial on nineteen counts of treason after the pro-Fascist statements he made or wrote for others in the innumerable paid broadcasts that came out of Rome or later North Italy in the period from 1940 (that is, before the United States entered the War) up to his arrest and terrible caged imprisonment in 1945. Particularly it is about Pound's period in St Elizabeth's, and the many devices used to prevent bringing him to trial. But it is also a psychobiography which seeks to interpret his psychological and intellectual character from a professional standpoint.

For Dr Torrey is not the usual kind of biographer; he is a clinical psychiatrist who had studied modern literature, followed Pound's footsteps in various places, worked in St Elizabeth's, and has the advantage of access to newly-released materials from the hospital itself and the Department of Justice. He has been attacked for errors both of fact and of interpretation, but there is much valuable material here about the early life and the hospital years. Torrey sees a truth and a deliberate campaign to obscure it, a good deal of this arising, in his view, from the activities of Dr Overholser, who obscured clinical reports, guided witnesses at various hearings, and in effect maintained the myth of Pound's insanity, possibly in the hope of being recognised as the benefactor of a major poet.

It is worth reminding ourselves, therefore, why many people *do* think Pound a great modern poet. The first thing to say is that without him it would have been almost impossible for the Modernist movement in the Anglo-Saxon line to cohere or become a public sensibility, a symptomatic art for the age. He was, said Ford Madox Hueffer, a "Baden Powell, always trying to get us under canvas", schooling and organising the young writers of London in 1908-14 in the tactics of the new art. He more or less singlehandedly created the scenario for Anglo-American Modernism. The task was an act of intellectual reconstruction involving a massive rereading of poetic and cultural history, but also a military enterprise, and he managed it with the tactics of war and revolution, inventing reasonably credible movements, taking over magazines, issuing manifestos and do's and don'ts, promoting writers, starting funds for them.

THE DETAILS OF HIS part in the Modern movement, and the part his American heritage played in forming and feeding its views, have been accumulating over the years in which scholars and critics have looked back to London in 1908-14 and Paris in 1918-30 as optimum times of literary creation. The track of Anglo-American Modernism was for a long time Pound's track, until his growing extremism led to his exclusion from many of his former magazines, and his growing egotism led to grandiose dreams of advising presidents and dictators on the economic and social organisation of a modern culture. Yet literary practice and critical theory still took much from him; and he did indeed shift the temper of the times.

There was, for example, Imagism—started, goes the story, in a Kensington teashop when Pound, impressed by the tactics of the French avant-garde, decided there had better be a movement, and called in Richard Aldington and her whom Pound christened "H. D., *Imagiste*." Like most movements, it was a loose amalgam of forces, theories and personalities. It

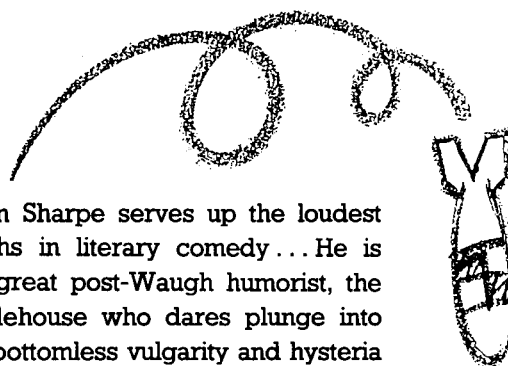
probably reached its most distilled meaning in Pound's own career, where the notion of "the hard image" did acquire a fundamental centrality, but none the less it most certainly offered many essential constituents fundamental to modern poetic lore—the free line, "superpositioning", etc. The work of poets who developed fundamental dissents with aspects of the theory, from Eliot on the one hand to the crypto-romantic Williams on the other, took on many of its weights and stresses. It shifted symbolic action to a new centre, and protected the ideal of poetic metamorphosis or transcendence from the post-symbolist void, composing a potential for poetic action that lay between shattered and fragmentary images and coherent ones, in pursuit of a redemptive kinesis.

In Torrey's version, Pound's influence scarcely starts before it finishes. The London period quickly became one of fading impact, a "decline from grace", largely due to Pound's egotism and eccentricity. Torrey is useful but extreme in exploring Pound's phallicist theories at this time, the belief he shared with Wyndham Lewis in the vortex of fecundity. This helps explain the outrages of *Blast*, which was to cause such offence that it was not hard for Amy Lowell to suborn Imagism and take it off in her own direction. He quotes Aldington in explaining that Pound's vitriolic hatred for and final departure from London was due to "his own conceit, folly, and bad manners." And the Paris episode ends similarly, with Pound generally outstaying his welcome, entering upon ever more absurd theories of the brain as a genital function ("The mind is an upspurt of sperm"), derived from Remy de Gourmont, and searching for divinity through coitus; and finally moving on in 1924 to Mussolini's Italy, where the Fascist part of the drama evolves.

A GOOD DEAL OF ALL THIS is valuably explored, with a fairly extensive use of research materials; certainly it constitutes a challenge, not least by justly forcing us to ask at what point Pound's ideas did become frighteningly extreme. But it is important to insist on the sense of world economic crisis to which Pound sought to respond by confronting its global implications, and on the relation of many of Pound's ideas to the extreme responses of an extreme time. The fact that does not come out is that Pound did possess a major critical intelligence, and sought a coherent sense of fundamental issues. None the less, the stylish indignation that had succoured his arguments on behalf of the new *paiduma* and the Risorgimento did turn into a strident polemic that became part of the volatile, dangerous material of the wartime radio talks. Pound sought to be less an avant-garde artist than an avant-garde politician, trusting to fame in the one for rightness in the other.

"My aims were good, but I blundered in the methods of attaining them", the depressed, contrite Pound said in the late-life interview with Grazia Levi in 1963. "I have been stupid like a telescope seen through the wrong end. Too late came the understanding. . . ." The great notions of the just republic became a form of folly, intensified by his confident belief that he alone had read history truly, and above all the history of America. Their social and political implications drifted away, and when the ear of Mussolini seemed turned toward him he

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responded with gratitude. The value of his advice can be indicated by his suggestion on his USA visit in 1939, when he was taken to Washington, that the USA give Guam to Japan in exchange for 300 Noh plays. The broadcasts were specific attacks on the Western leaders who would not listen to him. "Whom God would destroy, he first sends to the bughouse", he said of Roosevelt, attacking his mental condition. But it was Pound who ended in St Elizabeth's.

IN ONE BRIEF PASSAGE in Torrey's book, there is an image of one great meeting of the 20th century that never happened. When H. D. had her analysis with Freud in 1933, they discussed Pound; Freud told her that Pound had "very difficult Oedipal problems" and remarked: "If I had known Ezra I would have made him all right." To Pound in St Elizabeth's, surrounded by psychiatrists, Freud became "Viennese sewage", and he attacked those who inspected him for both their Jewishness and their sexual theories by calling them "pussyKiKeatrists." But Freud, at second hand, certainly saw Pound. It was psychiatry that kept him in the bughouse and out of the courts, and it is now, of course, psychiatry that guides Dr Torrey's own interpretation.

It is here that Torrey enters on his most fascinating material. He has had extensive access to case notes and documentation, though Overholser's own files on the case have, significantly or not, disappeared. In December 1945 four psychiatrists, representing both Pound and the prosecution, testified as to his mental condition, and declared him "insane and mentally unfit for trial, and . . . in need of care in a mental hospital." In Torrey's view, Overholser, the most influential figure, helped direct the judgment of the other three witnesses. In the following years Pound was under Overholser's care at St Elizabeth's, and under regular observation. He was, however, never fully diagnosed, and received no treatment.

Various examinations, in which Pound was not particularly cooperative and at which he offered ill-defined symptoms, produced various diagnoses. He was held to be variously psychotic, schizophrenic, and paranoid. To Merrill Moore, a fellow-poet as well as a psychiatrist, and a friend who had fought for his protective detention, he was "suffering from paranoid schizophrenia with strong affective components." In 1953 he was judged to be in a condition of "over-weening narcissism", but, perhaps since this made it seem perfectly possible for him to stand trial, Overholser interpreted this as a non-psychotic condition generating mental incompetence. The last note on Pound's record is "psychotic disorder, undifferentiated." The monthly "chronic notes" entered on his records repeatedly say that "no abnormal mental content was elicited", though some of his ideas on government and economics are described as "paranoid."

Torrey's thesis is in effect that Overholser conspired to protect Pound, maintained the façade of his insanity, gave him many privileges and much support, and concealed the extent of

his literary production within the hospital, and that "rather than locking Ezra Pound in St Elizabeth's, Dr Overholser really was locking the press, the public, and the Department of Justice out." He comments rather less on the fact, made clear enough, that the Department of Justice did not seem urgent in wanting to bring Pound to trial. Given the tense post-War atmosphere, Pound's original determination to defend himself vociferously, and the potential intellectually divisive effects, it may be that all parties concerned recognised the profound embarrassment of charging with treason a major poet who, for all his opinions, had engaged the world with the scale of his contribution to the modern arts.

THE SUBSEQUENT THIRTEEN YEARS in St Elizabeth's were, according to Torrey, extremely pleasant—the happiest period in Pound's life, as well as the time of his greatest recognition. His room in the hospital was booklined and he was able to type there, producing *Rock Drill* and most of *Thrones*, works which Torrey questions for their abstruseness. He continued to hold Fascist and racist opinions, frequently expressed with violence, and was in contact with younger neo-Fascists. He was convinced he was an exceptional mind and that no psychiatrist could possibly understand him. Pound was indeed happy in St Elizabeth's and probably did not want to leave, but this may well have been because of its protective atmosphere. Certainly the picture Torrey gives of an endless party in comfortable circumstances, with free opportunities for drinking and sex, hardly matches the circumstances of my own or other reported visits there. Pound wanted little; he liked working; he had learned (like many artists) to put up with privation and work under its pressure; and he feared coming out.

Torrey's own diagnosis comes out clearly at the end of the book. Pound he interprets as what would currently be called a narcissistic and cyclothymic personality, hyperproductive, hypersexual, needing constant admiration, and apt to respond with rage when criticised; such personalities are also prone to extreme depression in later life, or when the attention is withdrawn, as happened to Pound after his move back to Italy. To Torrey, Pound's "sin" was hubris or narcissistic pride. Reading back through the book, it is clear the conclusion has guided the selection of the evidence. The plot is the plot of a certain kind of tragedy, a form Pound increasingly concerned himself with.

But what kind of tragedy? "It had been a story of Calliope, the muse of epic poetry, attracted by the young Narcissus", Torrey finally writes. "The nymph Hubris jealously intervened, and was followed by Nemesis, the deity of those who allowed themselves to be touched by Hubris. Ezra Pound had not written a great epic. He had lived it." There are other forms of tragedy, however, including that about which George Steiner has just written so brilliantly:² the Antigone story, with its conflict of transcendental and historical need, its battle of the ego and the state, and its concern with the creative power that can struggle into the unsaid and fall into furious error.

In the end, the charge against Torrey's fascinating book must be his underestimation of the complexity of the poet's creative quarrel with the historical world. In Pound's refusal to consent fully to the views of the psychologists there was undoubtedly a guiding truth, or at least an awareness of the conflict of two

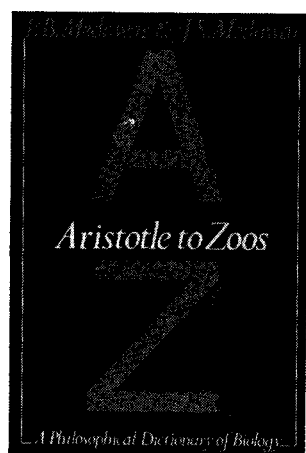
² See Ruth Padel, "A Portrait of Teiresias", *ENCOUNTER*, November.

kinds of gnosis. Torrey is often neither generous nor complex in his views of motive. The major poets who supported Pound for the Bollingen Prize in 1949 were surely pursuing a larger cause than protecting a traitor from the courts. If Overholser concerned himself with Pound's protection and his literary reputation, then perhaps he too did so for more complex

reasons than to safeguard his status in history. As for Pound's own drives and motives, they were surely more than self-regarding, as the crisis of *The Cantos* makes clear. As one puts this down and ponders the social definitions of sanity and madness, one wishes the more that the meeting of Pound and Freud had indeed taken place.

Voltaire to Medawar

Echoing the Enlightenment—By JOHN WEIGHTMAN



THE SATIRICAL PARABLE or tale, which was such a favourite weapon of 18th-century intellectuals in both France and England, has often been imitated in the 20th century—Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is only one instance among many—but this is the first time I have seen a modern version of that other Enlightenment war-machine, the dictionary or pseudo-dictionary.¹

The Medawars, at their publishers' suggestion, have mod-

elled themselves on Voltaire's *Dictionnaire philosophique* (first edition 1764)—which was itself inspired by the example of Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique* (1697-1706) and Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (1751-1772)—although, being short and explosive, it was rather like a hand-grenade in comparison with those two massive Trojan horses. And, of course, given the political and ecclesiastical censorship of the *ancien régime*, it was a hand-grenade lightly disguised as a pious bunch of roses.

Voltaire's main target was the metaphysical pseudo-certainties of Catholic dogma, which had so often led to persecution. He pretends seriously to discuss certain religious or metaphysical issues, such as "The Soul", "Baptism", "The Gospels", "Necessity", "Matter", etc., while turning each entry into a tissue of witticisms and *non sequiturs* illustrating the fluctuating ambiguities of religious language and the impossibility of intellectual certainty about anything beyond the reach of verification through the senses.

His secondary target was dogmatism of every kind resulting in oppression and suffering. At the time of composing the *Dictionnaire*, he had reached the age of seventy (*Candide* had

been published anonymously five years earlier), and he had entered upon the last, frenzied, evil-haunted phase of his life, the events of which were to ensure him a permanent place among the great representative, humanitarian figures of history. It is very moving to see how, at certain moments of high tension, his wit becomes incandescent, as it were, and he moves into grave, denunciatory rhetoric as he broods on the gratuitous wickedness of the world. The article "Torture" is exemplary in this respect, and makes doubly sad reading today when the world is full of new, persecuting dogmatisms, sometimes even worse than the horrors he was dealing with.

The Medawars' book belongs, inevitably, to a rather different register. It has not been written in a context of censorship, and it is not directed against an aggressive, all-pervading ideology. Also, to a large extent, it is a real dictionary; most of the entries are genuinely intended to define the present state of biological fact or theory about such subjects as "Geneticism" or "Neo-Darwinism" for the benefit of the lay-reader. To imagine a closer parallel with Voltaire, we should have to picture that other scientific couple, the Sakharovs, whiling away their exile in Gorki by composing a satirical *Dictionary of Marxism-Leninism*. But we cannot hope for that since, in Russia as in some other countries, one thing that has definitely improved since Voltaire's time is the efficiency of the censorship and the police.

However, although the Medawars have no institutionalised obscurantism to contend with, they have a certain polemical intention, which is to protect scientific thought from the ever-renewed attempt to enrol it in the service of religion or prejudice, or to turn it into a dogma or a mysticism in its own right. They have great fun with the egregious Earl of Bridgewater who, in the early 19th century, set up a fund for the celebration of the perfections of Nature as proof of God's handiwork; and their trenchant denunciations of Teilhard de Chardin as a religious fudger and of Lysenko as an unscrupulous semi-scientist make very satisfactory reading. All this aspect of their book sets them firmly in the Enlightenment tradition as non-dogmatic rationalists with a zest for inquiry, a robustly iconoclastic approach, and a sense of humour—and what is humour, if not an implicit recognition of the ultimate relativity of all thought, as long as it has not yet crystallised into

¹ *Aristotle to Zoos: A Philosophical Dictionary of Biology*. By P. B. and J. S. MEDAWAR. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £15.

objective, i.e. universally acceptable, principles? In spite of the new and immense complexities of the scientific knowledge they are dealing with, they inhabit essentially the same intellectual climate as Voltaire and Hume.

HAVING SAID THIS, I can perhaps, as a non-scientist, reproach them with being themselves, very occasionally, too hastily assertive about matters outside science. For instance, although they are writing, as it were, under the sign of Voltaire, and make ample use of the neo-Voltairean term "Panglossism" (from Dr Pangloss, the obtuse pedant in *Candide*) to stigmatise the naivety of those religious believers or optimistic evolutionists who proclaim that everything in Nature has an obvious and definable purpose, they are astonishingly imperceptive about *Candide* itself, Voltaire's only, but unique, masterpiece, which they dismiss (on p. 70) as being "in many ways a dull and tiresome book." I can only suppose that they looked through it hurriedly, and perhaps in an indifferent translation, since they did not notice that it is a profound and universal allegory, containing passages of superb prose, and every bit as remarkable, in its different mode, as *Alice in Wonderland*, which they do appreciate. Can there be a touch of English insularity here?

Similarly, while they make many enlightening remarks about the use of language in science and the nature of language in general, on p. 80 they suddenly refer to English, with apparent pride, as "the richest and most versatile of all languages." Had they been linguists or translators, I suspect they would have queried the use of "richest" and "most versatile" in this connection. It is true that English is now more of a universal vehicle than any other language, and therefore can probably boast the widest and most heterogeneous vocabulary; however, each major language tends to be rich and versatile according to its particular nature. Many things are possible, for example, in French or Russian that cannot be done in English, and vice versa; but who, apart from some unimaginable genius, would be qualified to pass judgment on the relative merits of the different kinds of richness and versatility exemplified by the different languages of the world?

But these little outbursts of prejudice hardly matter. After all, Voltaire was very rude about Shakespeare, whom he couldn't fit into the congealed, neo-classical aesthetic characteristic of the now-dead part of his output. The still-living part is the intellectual quest, the keeping alive of the light of reason, the perpetual refusal of certainty in those areas where definite conclusions are a form of intellectual sclerosis. Under the influence of Newtonian cosmology, he had begun by supposing that there must be a Grand Design in Nature, but experience and reflection gradually taught him that, if such is the case, the Design is so intricate, and so full of apparent anomalies incomprehensible to the human mind, that man has to be extremely modest in his general pronouncements about it. This, if I understand them rightly, is exactly the Medawars' position as scientists.

For them, as for Voltaire, "Help thou mine unbelief" would not mean "Please give me faith to believe the unproven", but "Give me the strength to accept all knowledge as provisional." In the modern English-speaking world, this attitude is often

associated with the philosophy of Karl Popper, whom the Medawars quote frequently; but it is by no means a 20th-century invention. Without going back as far as Socrates, who illustrates it to a certain extent, in spite of Popper's strictures on Plato's *Republic*, we can say that it flowered during the first flush of the Enlightenment: in Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Diderot. The puzzling thing is that so many apparent heirs of the Enlightenment in the 19th and 20th centuries should have departed from it, often developed an impatient contempt for the piecemeal, tentative conclusions of science as a supposedly irrelevant form of knowledge and gone in for various kinds of "totalising" philosophies, which are really presumptuous faiths in disguise.

These the Medawars gleefully attack under the general German heading of *Naturphilosophie*, although the tendency has also many non-German representatives. In France, the most remarkable in the 20th century has not been poor Teilhard de Chardin, of whom the Medawars make mince-meat, but Jean-Paul Sartre, who has often been mistakenly called the modern Voltaire, and who unfortunately does not come within the Medawars' purview, since he never wrote about science. Despite his admirable intellectual gifts, Sartre was completely indifferent to the ideal of "objective truth", which he assumed to be a bourgeois convention. And whereas, in relation to God, Voltaire merely cracked jokes, Sartre, in moments of philosophic delirium, seems to have genuinely and unhumorously believed that, in the absence of God, he had to become his own god and intuit some total, non-reductionist truth by spinning a web of words.

THE MEDAWARS are at the opposite post-Enlightenment pole in defending reductionist analysis as a basic scientific procedure (a whole entry is devoted to this point), and in their willingness to expound miscellaneous fragments of biological knowledge without claiming to demonstrate how they might all ultimately fit together. They would agree with Sartre that the imagination or creative faculty is the driving force of the mind, but they add that, in science, its hypotheses must be put to the test before they can be accepted as working assumptions. However, they take an elastic, rather than a pedantic, view of these assumptions, any one of which can be temporarily useful, provided it offers an acceptable explanation of the largest number of "facts." It is in this spirit, for instance, that we must accept the greatest of all the working hypotheses of biology—the Theory of Evolution, even though neo-Darwinian science still leaves a great many of the incidental problems unsolved, and offers no answer, of course, to the fundamental questions: why did it all start in the first place? and why does evolutionary nature take these particular forms and not others? The Medawars are not, I think, concerned to pick holes in evolutionism. As an interested ignoramus, who cannot hope to master the mathematical theory of genetics and is therefore quite beyond the pale, I occasionally wonder if some of the key-terms, such as "*natural selection*", "*adaptation*", "*mutations*", etc. will not turn out to be misapprehensions like "*phlogiston*", since I still cannot feel them to be quite right, even after reading about them once

again here. But the Medawars seem happy enough with them as provisional, intermediary devices, although, like Voltaire, they willingly throw in the sponge on the general metaphysical issues—what came before creation is unthinkable, the origin of life is a mystery, and its ultimate “purpose” is an anthropomorphic pseudo-question.

If, according to Samuel Butler’s aphorism, “*a hen is only an egg’s way of making another egg*”, then a woman or a man is only an embryo’s way of making another embryo. Actually, the Medawars refrain from giving the phrase this human application—perhaps their warm humanism recoils from emphasising the point too sharply—but the inference is constantly present in all they say about the relentless and indifferent working of accident and/or necessity in human, as in all animal, biology (Down’s syndrome, sickle-cell disease, phenylketonuria, etc.). Life has no cosmic significance, and its “value” is a local phenomenon invented, and necessarily so, by man. But they mention more than once that man can “improve” on Nature. Skin-grafts, which Nature could not carry out unaided, are a much more effective treatment for burns than the “natural” healing process of the body. This is only to say, of course, that Nature, as it has evolved in the human mind, is capable of feed-back on Nature as it continues to operate as impersonal necessity outside the human consciousness (leaving aside, incidentally, as insoluble the problem of how far impersonal necessity may be operating all the while *within* the human consciousness).

THIS, I TAKE IT, is exactly what is behind Voltaire’s conclusion in *Candide*: “*il faut cultiver son jardin.*” After being buffeted by necessity in a variety of settings, the eponymous hero eventually settles down to the only possible solution of the problem of living: the piecemeal “improvement” of the patch of land on which he and his companions find themselves, and through which impersonal necessity continues to flow. In short, gardening is a metaphor for all positive human activity, because a garden is the outcome of the tension between Nature in man and Nature in general.

In many parts of their book, the Medawars are extending, and bringing up to date, this Voltairean gardening metaphor, and particularly so when they say they are addressing

“... that increasing population of reflective people who see in biology the science most relevant to the understanding and melioration of the human condition.”

Do they prove their point? Is it true that biology, which hardly existed in Voltaire’s day, now carries the main weight of the Enlightenment tradition and, in addition to the sheer pleasure of greater knowledge, gives us renewed hope for the future?

As it happens, Voltairean scholars have always disagreed about the exact emotional force of *il faut cultiver son jardin*. Some see it as a bracing, optimistic slogan, looking forward to *les lendemains qui chantent*; others are inclined to look upon it as a counsel of despair, a stoical admission that life is an incomprehensible and fundamentally unchangeable muddle which men of good will—who seem, by and large, to be in a minority—try to palliate as best they can.

Temperamentally, the Medawars must be counted among

the optimists. They have all the gusto of scientists primarily absorbed in the study of immediate and limited problems, for which solutions will probably be found. The lay-reader is heartened by their bluff common sense as he tries to master the biological details of “Bacteriophages”, “Barnacles”, “Behaviourism”, etc., and he can see at once that the advances on the medical level, at least, have been little short of miraculous. The discovery of antibiotics “ended the tyranny over man of micro-organisms, the most important selective force at work upon human beings since the beginning of their evolution.” Average life expectancy in the developed countries has increased from 33-35 years in the 18th century to 72-77 years at the present time. All sorts of cures and prostheses have been invented that were quite impossible even 50 years ago.

But the tone is definitely less confident when it comes to assessing the runaway effects of science, since science, like the Nature from which it springs and with which it interferes, has its own, totally amoral, impetus. The medical progress just mentioned has had the negative consequence of creating the problem of population control, and the entry devoted to that subject is, understandably, full of honest doubt:

“In a free society, one in which the members cannot be required either to reproduce themselves or to abstain from doing so, the Minister of Population would have to work as best he could through fiscal and educational means—by bribing, coaxing, cajoling or pleading with people to have a greater or lesser number of children as the prevailing situation required.”

Does this mean that there might inevitably be a point at which a society had to give up its freedom because of a population crisis, and adopt a policy similar to the present Chinese one?

The entry on *Animals and Human Obligations* is still more unsure, because it doesn’t tell us why the opening up of the world by science should *not* eliminate certain animal species. As the record shows, Nature herself destroys species; should we be more squeamish than she is? The case is not argued, and the conclusion is particularly feeble:

“All that one asks of human sensibilities is that the issue be taken seriously enough to carry political weight. Nothing is quite so effective a catalyst of legislation as the feeling that it will bring political advantage to the person or party that initiates it. Unhappily, in addition to having no rights in common law, animals generally have no political clout whatsoever.”

In other words: men, being what they are, will presumably continue to exploit and/or destroy animals according to their immediate human needs, as the majority have always done.

The prospects are no more reassuring as regards bio-engineering. The Brave New World of wholesale cloning could be at hand:

“The practical realisation of such a foolhardy ambition would call for the proliferation of a fertilised human egg under tissue culture conditions and the provision of an adequate supply of young foster-mothers hormonally prepared for the implantation of the egg. None of this is technically very difficult to accomplish: what is required all in one place is the ambition to accomplish it, a sufficient

concentration of money, a modest technical proficiency, and folly."

Since folly has never been in short supply, it is possible that some resurgent Hitler, or Gaddafi or Idi Amin would have a go and land us with a lot of creatures devoid of singular identity, which has always so far been regarded as an essential human characteristic. If so, biology is as fascinatingly dangerous as atomic physics, and the myth of the Sorcerer's Apprentice is as fresh as ever.

Clearly, post-Enlightenment thought still has some way to go before "evolved" Nature (reflective man) brings "raw" Nature (man himself as animal, together with his setting) under control.

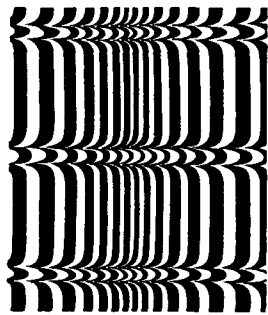
The early hope of the Enlightenment was to define the nature of man, so as to adjust society and the world harmoniously to his needs. The definition has proved to be much more difficult than was once thought, so much so indeed that the Medawars quote, with no apparent reservations, an

aphorism they attribute to Merleau-Ponty: "It is in the nature of man to have no nature." Actually, Merleau-Ponty was echoing Sartre who, in his wildly romantic thirst for God-like freedom, dogmatically rejected *la nature humaine* as a limiting concept inherited from the obscurantisms of the past.

Obviously man, in comparison with the other animals and because of exogenetic evolution, has a very complex and fluid nature, which has taken various historical forms, and will no doubt take others in the future. But if, in the last resort, there is no such thing as "human nature" that biological science or other kinds of knowledge can hope to define, there is no basis on which to build a progressively more harmonious society, and the "melioration" postulated by the Medawars evaporates into a sort of infinite regress open to any sort of incidental accident. Perhaps, in fact, this is the ultimate truth, but one hopes not. Here again, I find myself on Voltaire's side rather than Sartre's. If reason is to function as the Medawars (and others amongst us) would like it to do, then "human Nature" has to be taken as an indispensable working-hypothesis, that is, as a provisional faith.

From Wave to Cave

Recent Poetry—By JOHN MOLE



IT SEEMS appropriate to open this review by considering the work of a highly-regarded American poet whose entire opus to date has been a sort of never-ending overture. To take a phrase from the long title poem of his latest collection, *A Wave*,¹ John Ashbery's is a poetry of "consistent eventfulness." Everything happens where he is, and almost anything goes. *Where* it goes, though, is not so much a destination as the happening itself:

*And the serial continues:
Pain, expiation, delight, more pain,
A frieze that lengthens continually, in the happy way
Friezes do, and no plot is produced,
Nothing you could hang an identifying question on.*

Besides, there's no time to stop for questions. You don't get off the serial loop of an Ashbery poem at any stage. Some of the noises may bewilder you but there's no danger of the tape getting snarled up in the machine. It runs with a hypnotic smoothness and the confidence of total efficiency. "We get lost in life, but life knows where we are." Ashbery is very fond of

making statements like this. He can be as portentous en route through a poem as he can be gamesome in his titles—"Ditto, Kiddo", "Just Someone you say Hi to", etc.—but whether or not you give your assent there can be no doubt that to substitute *the poem* for *life* in that particular statement is to come up with a fair definition of what it often feels like somewhere in the middle.

The poem knows where we are, all right. It put us all there in the first place, Ashbery included. He's the delighted victim of his own ingenuity. Not for him "the tedium/Of self-expression." Anything but. All is subordinate to the process of defining the process. As he says in a witty prose piece, "Description of a Masque":

"Then we all realised what should have been obvious from the start: that the setting would go on evolving eternally, rolling its waves across our vision like an ocean, each one new yet recognizably a part of the same series, which was creation itself. . . . And the corollary of all this was that we would go on witnessing these tableaux, not that anything prevented us from leaving the theater, but there was no alternative to our interest in finding out what would happen next."

I feel this exactly as I read the poems. I'm certainly interested, intrigued even, but there's no alternative to my curiosity as to how Ashbery is going to get out of it this time. He *will*, of course—he's outstandingly accomplished—and yet, for the duration, I'm totally absorbed by the display. Poem after poem

¹ *A Wave*. By JOHN ASHBERY. Carcanet, £4.95.

What are conservatives saying about Sex and God in American Politics?

"I didn't realize that this country's atheists and agnostics had such fragile character that the mere mention of God might cause them grave distress. I am sorry that the country's atheists are such wimps."

-R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

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-Midge Decter

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reminds me of the jazz pianist Earl Hines' remark: "Every night I like to find a different harmonic route to a certain point, and when you see me smiling you know I'm lost." Ashbery is smiling all the time, and it's the confidence that does it. He's the supreme *improvisateur*, an aesthetic adventurer who gets lost without ever losing his cool. The more elaborately he can tease his material, himself, and his reader so that "we . . . all become part of a collective movement" the happier he is. "I know that I braid too much my own/Snapped-off perceptions of things as they come to me", he has written in a poem from an earlier volume, and in another—

What is writing?

Well, in my case, it's getting down on paper

Not thoughts, exactly, but ideas, maybe:

Ideas about thoughts. Thoughts is too grand a word.

Ideas is better, though not precisely what I mean.

Someday I'll explain. Not today though.

Not in *A Wave* either. Ashbery has gone on evading those "identifying questions" like the Protean master he is. Always he's somewhere else already, relishing a new dimension—"the segments of the trip swing open like an orange"—and sporting in it, juggling those snapped-off perceptions:

I think all games and disciplines are contained here,

Painting, as they go, dots and asterisks that

We force into meanings that don't concern us

And so leave us behind. . . .

But what *does* concern us? Occasionally these poems disturb with a truly memorable or chilling line—"Being alone at the center of a moan that did not issue from me"—but I can never quite believe it. It's too close to "the tedium of self-expression." No, the game's the thing. When "suddenly the lonesomeness becomes a pleasant city/Fanning out around a lake"—that's the quintessential Ashbery event. Yet another opportunity for intelligent discourse in a cool, well-lighted place.

AMY CLAMPITT'S WELL-LIGHTED place is the guest room where

we get a fire going, listen

to Mozart, read Marianne Moore, or

sit looking out at the eiders, trig

in their white-over-black as they tip

and tuck themselves into the swell, almost

as though diving under the eiderdown

in a gemütlich hotel room at Innsbruck.

Her first full-length collection, *The Kingfisher*,² is a most impressive debut. The English edition has been slimmed down from the American volume which contained an additional eighteen poems and some explanatory notes, but it is still a substantial book. Amy Clampitt owes much to what Elizabeth Bishop, describing Marianne Moore, called her *chinoiserie* of manners, and reading *The Kingfisher* puts me in mind, too, of

Bishop's delightful account of how her friend, when not at her desk, used a clipboard with the poem under construction on it, carrying it about the apartment "even when I'm dusting or washing the dishes, Elizabeth."

I imagine Amy Clampitt with a similar clipboard in the several guest rooms she has occupied throughout what seems a provisional but mellow cosiness of exile—even on the Dorset farm recalled in her excellent poem "On the Disadvantages of Central Heating" with "big eager sheepdogs/muscling in on bookish profundities." Hers is an exquisite vocabulary of objects, deployed with a precision which seldom becomes precious throughout poems remarkable for their sustained passages of meditation. She seems aware of that predilection for "bookish profundities" and is often nicely ironic at her own expense:

Hemmed in by the prim

deodorizing stare

of the rare-book room,

I stumbled over,

lodged under glass, a

revenant Essay on Color

by Mary Gartside, a woman

I'd never heard of, open

to a hand-rendered

watercolor illustration

wet-bright as the day

its unadulterated red-

and-yellow was laid on

(publication date 1818).

Moore and Bishop would have approved of both the exactitude and the humour of that parenthesis, but Amy Clampitt's particular, demure, self-aware way of stumbling is all her own. She seems to me least successful when her carefully-worked images are too obviously merely themselves and not fully absorbed by her meditations on botany, art, music and friendship. This is particularly noticeable when she looks at what Ashbery calls "the topiary trash of the present": "Daily the cortege of crumpled/defunct cars/goes by by the lasagna-/layered flatbed/truckload. . . ." Another Martian bites the dustbowl. But not too often.

THE COVER ILLUSTRATION for Medbh McGuckian's second collection, *Venus and the Rain*,³ is a detail from a painting by the 19th-century Secessionist Jan Toorop. It has been well-chosen—a fluid, densely-textured canvas reproduced in shadowy monochrome. The perspective recedes into a forest of prominently-rooted, sinuous trees which gather round a dark, standing pool, and the whole scene is ambivalently enchanting and sinister. In the foreground, a child sits in a high-chair—as if *indoors*, and as if the backdrop of the forest were only a painter's illusion. Immediately behind the child, a young woman is standing in what appears to be a half-opened doorway. Is she coming out or in? Is she choosing the natural world or an elaborate fantasy? Or is she already the victim of a choice made for her in which the child is a crucial element?

² *The Kingfisher*. By AMY CLAMPITT. Faber, £4.00.

³ *Venus and the Rain*. By MEDBH MCGUCKIAN. Oxford University Press, £4.50.

To look closely at this picture is to be drawn into a close, teasing world of vital, unanswerable questions which are at the same time about the illusions of art and of domestic experience. To go on, then, to read Medbh McGuckian's poems is to continue the experience in colour. She's a fantasist of the everyday, and hers is a thoroughly up-to-date verse—"retelling the story/Of its own provocative fractures"—which applies many of the symbols of aesthetic romanticism to a thoroughly contemporary exploration of love and motherhood. Often she seems a rather more robust and domesticated *Dame aux Camélias*:

Each lighted
Window shows me cardiganed, more desolate
Than the garden, and more hallowed
Than the hinge of the brass-studded
Door that we close, and no one opens,
That we open and no one closes.

That juxtaposition of the desolate and the hallowed is characteristic, just as McGuckian's tone keeps shifting from the bewildered to the benign. However, it would be quite wrong to suggest that these poems are at all straightforwardly expressive. Self and others are a cluster of images to be arranged and rearranged kaleidoscopically:

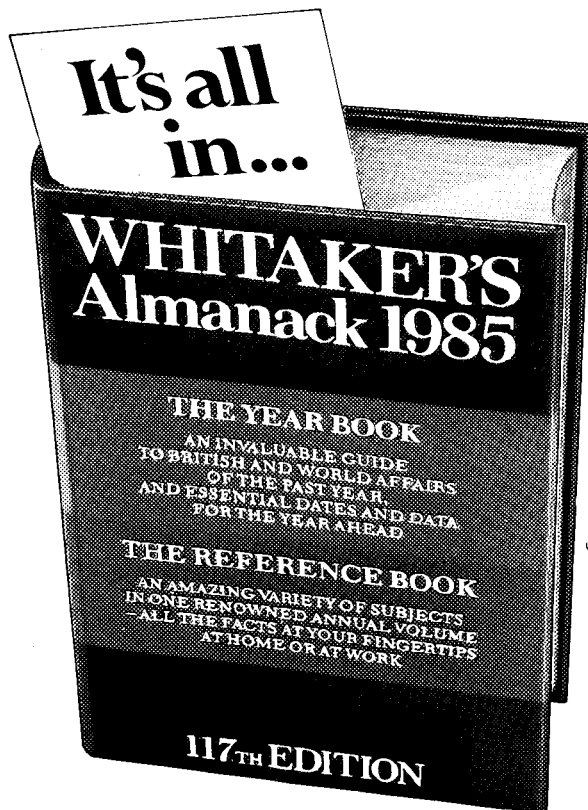
No matter
How hysterically the clouds swing out,
They may not alter by one drop of rain
The safari of the garden beds, or make
Louisa's dress with its oyster-coloured overlay

Of moss, kidnap me kindly for a day,
As though a second wife were sleeping
Already in your clothes, the sewn
Lilies near the ground growing downwards.

Sun, rain, house, garden, forest, etc. became both the constituents of personality and a means of defining relationships. At one moment the elemental is impinging on the domestic—"a waterfall/Unstitching itself down the front stairs"—and at the next a household prop transforms itself into an emotional strategy—"Except for the staircase that delivers you/Like a jetty into the middle of a lake,/There is no measure of arrival, no/Negotiation. . . ." This goes on all the time, a considerable poetic confidence at work on an obsessive ground of private enquiry.

Medbh McGuckian's poetry, impressive though it is, does raise the question of how far it's possible to take a coded practice before it becomes a restrictive one. She is in some ways an obscure writer despite the attractiveness of her imagery. Rather too often I feel that I have to take it on trust that, for example, "the change in your voice when speaking/Is like an orange in a snowdrift", and it's easy to get lost on one of her extended, metamorphic trails although she seems aware of this and even goes so far as to make it (by implication) one of her credentials when she suggests that "my longer and longer sentences/Prove me wholly female." Yes, but it could also prove her simply rather indulgent.

WHAT IMPINGES ON Selima Hill's world of family life appears to



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be not so much the elemental as the tamely transcendental. She is intrigued by ancient history, particularly by the Egyptian deities, and is continually surprised by double-take, though never to the extent of having her composure shaken:

*When I meet her at the station, I say
Hello, Mum! and think Hello, Thoth,
This is the Weighing of the Heart.*

This is also the beginning of pretentiousness. Despite a pleasing humour, Selima Hill cannot avoid the curse of tedium, which seems to be casting its spell at the moment over several poets much published in what the blurb for *Saying Hello at the Station*⁴ rather smugly calls "leading literary journals." Like them, she chooses to mess about on the inlets of narrative, creating little eddies of counterflow—all those lower-cased, casually interjected voices, many of which turn out to be a digest of the poet's current reading list: "In 'Above Tooey Mountain', I am indebted to the letters of Sir James Melville, James Joyce's mother, and Gerard Manley Hopkins (written on the day that he died)." All well and good, but the result is an absorption of those writers' personalities into a flat monotone of utterance.

What Hill lacks overall is any sense of rhythm or daring beyond what is licensed by the vogue. In anecdotal poems such as "The Flowers", "The Bicycle Ride" and "Chicken

Feathers" she shows what she could do if she were to trust more to her gift for candid, direct observation:

*He went to his room with an orange
in his hand and died there
sometime during the afternoon.
My mother spent her day in the kitchen.
When I came in from the garden
I was sent upstairs
to call him down to tea:
he was sitting by the window
with his back to me.
On the table beside him
were four boats made of orange peel,
with the pith piled neatly inside them.
My mother couldn't stand up.
She kept saying she was sorry,
but she couldn't stand up.
It must be the shock she said.
It wasn't grief.
Come and sit down she said,
And have your tea.*

Good, and deceptively modest. Selima Hill has the makings of an individual voice which will stand more chance of being heard if she can resist going for the flatness of a fashionably contemporary tone.

⁴ *Saying Hello at the Station*. By SELIMA HILL. Chatto & Windus, £2.95.

⁵ *The Stubborn Forest*. By PAUL HYLAND. Bloodaxe Books, £3.95.

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IF MEDBH MCGUCKIAN and, to a lesser extent, Selima Hill are sibylline keepers of the mysteries, there's something in Paul Hyland of the gamekeeper at home. He's a plain speaker, and his is a rugged, hewn, earth-bound poetry which works hard to make clearings in the natural world where past and present can be seen as contiguous. However, although bones are very much alive for him in his thoroughly informed, historical imagination, he can rarely make them live for long in his verse. A typical poem is observant—"You mind things; you'm observant I can see", says one of the several countrymen he celebrates in *The Stubborn Forest*⁵—but, as he admits, "I am all eyes, pointing things out."

Too much of his work is just too closely packed for my taste, and his predilection for a matching density of language in the Anglo-Saxon vein reinforces the sense of verbal clutter which is strangely at odds with his desire to share an "open ground." In "Fin de Siècle",

*Patrons no longer jostle naked flanks
nor do pigs sag on hooks, strain senseless snouts
to scents raised from the sawdust by their blood.*

As Tennyson once said, "Kick the geese out of the boat." There'd still be plenty of room for the pigs.

Despite these reservations, and my suspicion that his portentous radiophonic workshop sequence, "Domingus", which rounds off the book is the kind of thing better left to second-rate imitators of Ted Hughes, I admire Hyland's work and his *example*. He's an excellent topographer. His Purbeck poems are a gritty clutch, and his portraits—particularly those which describe the endurance of old age—are often very moving indeed:

*her knuckles whiten as she lifts the cup's
thick rim, so gently, to her parched blue lips,
steam clouds her eyes, and gently, as she sips,
age beats the living daylights out of her.*

So nearly an embarrassing contrivance, that striking last line is one of a number of similar tropes that Paul Hyland earns by the seriousness of his endeavour and gets away with by the skin of his teeth.

I'M NOT SO SURE that Herbert Lomas gets away with this (from his poem "Sad Cows"):

*Horses have a sense of humour, but these cows
Do not. Their slow gait has the float of hopelessness.
One hoists from the field like an old-age pensioner
Who's just remembered the loo and plods slow-motion,
Humping, as if into a gas chamber, leaning
On her shoulder-bones towards a place that's lost a
meaning.*

The kind of shock-tactic deployment of similes, here, whereby thoughts of the loo become the imminence of a gas-chamber amounts to a mixture of whimsicality and horror which I find disconcerting. Lomas is something of a satirist, and presumably I'm supposed to, but there seems to me a case for suggesting that if sentimentality is—as Eliot defined it—emotion in excess of the fact, then lapses of taste can often be recognised by allusiveness inappropriate to the emotion.

Certainly Lomas makes you *think* about last things. His enumeration of them is uncompromising and vivid. In "Nunhead Cemetery", "Some find the blackberries stewing here delicious:/Heat from the gravestones and corpsemeat nitrogen/Fatten up great black clots from the juice citizens." We're all citizens, yes, and in it together, but as verse these lines are as congested as the graveyard—heads of the characters hammering up blackberries—and Lomas rams his dark poems into the light with remorseless irony. "Even in the sun it's an air of funeral." His theme, a striving to achieve the redemption of that pervasive irony, is the unexpected suddenness of grace. In church—still as distracted by the godawfulness of things as in the graveyard—he seems about to give up when "here stuffed in a blue-chinned Greek-looking worshipper,/Pockets stuffed with evening newspapers, coat/Flapping, and grabs God by the throat/ / . . . And suddenly I'm in it: his grace has snatched/Me out. . . ."

What Lomas witnesses to, here, is moving, and *Fire in the Garden*⁶ does contain some memorable poems—particularly "The Bridges that Matter", "Elegy for Robin Lee", and "With the Pike Behind Her"—but a feeling of overkill remains. Grace is snatched like a quick bite at lunchtime in the public gardens of a city full of the mighty roar of mortal traffic, and the result is too often indigestion.

⁶ *Fire in the Garden*. By HERBERT LOMAS. Oxford University Press, £4.50.

⁷ *Moving In*. By CONNIE BENSLEY. Harry Chambers/Peterloo Poets, £4.50.

⁸ *Familiars*. By PHILIP GROSS. Harry Chambers/Peterloo Poets, £3.00.

⁹ *The Ice Factory*. By PHILIP GROSS. Faber, £3.25.

BEGINNING HER POEM "Self Selection", Connie Bensley exclaims: "At last *Safeways*/Has made a notable contribution/To everyday philosophical thought"—as if she had been waiting all her life for it to do so, without for a moment believing that it ever would. This catches exactly the tone of much of her work, an ironic relish for life's little surprises (by no means all of them pleasant) within the more pervasive context of a compassionate, if somewhat chilly, acceptance of domestic routine. The poems in *Moving In*,⁷ her second collection, are sharp, intelligent, vulnerably immaculate, and they make much of their impact by pulling the shreds of whatever carpet remains from under your feet.

Working against these strengths, though, is a minimalist tendency which reduces the scale of painful experience to what can be accommodated in a few snappy lines of desolate irony. Here is the whole of "Short Story":

*As I knocked the cup from the shelf
my mind flashed up reprises:
that glass you dropped, the dark hotel room,
my letter in the rack, your car driving away;
a masterpiece of précis.
The cup hits the floor. I turn to pick up the pieces.*

This is certainly accomplished—a skilful *précis*, if not a masterpiece of the art—but I find it just a bit too coolly fixed in its selectivity. The details are like stills outside a cinema, motion (and emotion) frozen into familiar attitudes and thereby isolated into cliché.

Moving In is an apt title in several ways. It is, of course, the photographer's means of getting a close-up, and stresses Connie Bensley's talent for startling the reader by suddenly focusing on an intimate moment of pain or shock. Also, as well as suggesting her awareness of how fragile and temporary any kind of residence is—and the most sympathetic side of her work derives from this—it points up her ironist's compulsion to move in for the kill. She can be devastatingly accurate, and poems such as "Scandal" and "The Innocent" are penny-peepshows—miniature, authentic horrors of the commonplace.

I'm less happy, though, about her over-readiness to go for the closure of a bite-on-the-bullet, laconic ending—"I hurry on. It looks like rain", "All it takes is time, rehearsal/and one's own gullibility", etc. A wry, terminal smile will only stretch so far. At most it provokes the shrug of assent, a *c'est la vie* complicity which is not far removed from the knowing wink. Although seldom comfortable, and with no illusions which have not been paid for, this can nevertheless appear to be a kind of *Safeways* poetry—brave hearts in the supermarket, a too-carefully-processed, bitter-sweet stoicism. It would be good to see Connie Bensley knocking tins off the shelf more often.

DUE TO THE PERSPICACITY of Harry Chambers—who recognised a talent before it came to wider attention by winning the National Poetry Competition in 1982—fifteen out of the forty poems in Philip Gross's first Faber collection have already appeared (plus three others) as a Peterloo volume, *Familiars*.⁸ Or rather, in several cases, as the acknowledgements in *The Ice Factory*⁹ point out, versions of them have.

Gross is a conscientious poet who beavers away to get it right. In some cases, with these reworkings, he has cut the poems by (and almost *in*) half, as with his impressive "The Displaced Persons Camp"—a title originally carrying the modish prefix "From" which he has wisely dropped. In others, the changes are minimal but significant. "First Encounter", about the birth of a child, and rather an over-written piece before and after treatment, seems to have been subject merely to a bit of tinkering to make it seem more immediate. "You would not be denied:/a moth-tap at the glass, a blip of fear/ /on a dark screen, homing" becomes "You were not to be denied./ A flicker of static, of morse: yes, yes./A blip on a dark screen, homing." It's interesting to see a good new poet learning like this. "Yes, yes" is an improvement, certainly, and yet . . . it does seem a trifle conscientiously worked-in after the impulse in order to give an otherwise inert poem the air of urgency.

Gross is the real thing, though—a poet already finding out how to go his own way. The compacted detail and ceremonial, elegiac stateliness of the title poem, "The Bone Ship", "Ignis Fatuus" and others owe plenty to the early Geoffrey Hill, and recollections of childhood transposed into the third person—like the excellent "The Musical Cottage"—recall the later MacNeice. The sooner he grows out of such Martian whimsicalities as "Crab" and "Snail Paces" ("They left small frills/to glide and teeter, balancing their shells/like the family china") the better, but a poem like "Beside the Reservoir" is impressive entirely in its own right:

*A surface still as marble. Drystone masonry
runs straight in, under. There is no other shore
but a thin brilliance of mist. One tree
stoops, waist-deep. At the small thud of a door*

*the gulls flush upwards briefly. By the car
two figures stand as if breath-taken. Once
they would have talked, talked, talked, troubling to share
this luminous distance. Now, he points*

*to bird-flecks drifting far out: a precarious
species, winter visitors. She takes his arm,
keeps company, through certain silences
accepted like the need for water, for the drowned farm.*

AT FIRST GLANCE, Patrick Hare appears to be merely one more purveyor of amiable, medium-length, comfortable fits of

reminiscence. Conversational, unhurried, he dwells on his early years in a Derbyshire village. I must admit to having been resistant, and hardly encouraged by a frequently self-conscious properness of syntax which keeps stiffening an already rather pedestrian verse into what seems an almost pedantic concentration on grammatical accuracy. There are sentences which read like parts of a translation exercise in an old Latin Primer—"Had not the wall anchored him he would have/Hammered my bones . . ."—but I finished *Aeroplanes in Childhood*¹⁰ with more than a little admiration.

There's a touch of the genuine visionary in Patrick Hare. His poems are a variety of burnished, heraldic nostalgia. Milk churns shine "like armour dented/From championship", the face of a shadowy poacher is "a moonlit mask", and the sky behind those childhood aeroplanes is an "unaltered blue faithful as in a story." This sense of being part of a myth not entirely of one's own making is something Hare has in common with Edwin Muir, whose Orkney recollections kept coming to mind as I read. Like Muir, Hare still has one foot in Eden, and firmly enough to prevent him from becoming sentimental. When he recalls a field full of cows in "Convoy Accident, 1943", he has not forgotten how "The grass creaked in their guileless mouths." That's a marvellous line, and his book is full of such luminous details. They're intensified, too, by a continual fear of exile or even excommunication: "Sister Perpetua on the landline . . . her rebuke, her sure arrival." In one poem, "The Misses Duke", he describes an occasion when

*in the parlour
With Papa in a haloed snap
Eternally teasing them,
They ate the cake that failed.*

What has certainly not failed for Patrick Hare is the *light*. A "haloed snap" is just what several of his best poems become, much as Samuel Palmer's "Valley of Vision" could be called a series of haloed paintings. The village of Two Dales is Hare's Shoreham. Uneven, often clumsy, *Aeroplanes in Childhood* is nevertheless a distinctive achievement.

SEVERAL OF B. C. LEALE's poems are *about* paintings or, in this case ("Sketch by Constable"), concerned with the early stages of a very well-known one:

*The dog knows it's an early draft. He's
full of destinations and joy as he
rounds the first bend from the house—
his shadow sharp, vibrant. Even the
path's edge is of frisky earth.*

*About five years later he's finished.
His short run by the water's edge completed and
he's famous. With muted shadow he looks up
to the men in a motionless hay-wain.*

Leale's sympathies are clearly with that "sharp, vibrant" early joyfulness. The men in the motionless hay-wain have the

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¹⁰ *Aeroplanes in Childhood*. By PATRICK HARE. Harry Chambers/Peterloo Poets, £4.50.

posthumous dignity of Fine Art, and one suspects that he's as bored by completion as the dog is.

Leale's a provisionalist, committed to experiment and a modest amount of risk. Large, finished canvases are not for him, and *Leviathan*,¹¹ his first full collection although he's now into his fifties, has all the freshness of a painter's (and musician's) sketchbook. His short poems, often two to a page and still with plenty of white space around them, are packed with a pithy, doodling wisdom. Many of them delight in ellipses and the shorthand urgency of ampersands, but there's nothing diffuse about them—they become the instances of their composition. Often it's as if the notes for a poem have, surreptitiously, become the poem itself, and Leale knows how to leave well alone. Only a thoroughly practised writer is able to resist working his marginalia towards the centre of the page. Like the footprint in wet cement which he observes in "Marked Remains", his instinct is for "disturbing a surface/casually/for ever" (the significant weight of a single line given to that *casually*) and his playful linguistic displacements are of a piece with his more overtly serious inventiveness—as in "A Vegetation to be Ready by the Parsnip":

*Aubergine aubergine
Lettuce pray for the marrow
For no one radishes the end
We have all cucumbered our unworthy chives
With foul swedes
It ill beetroots us to publicly sprout pea
From the endive our fennels
None escapes the cabbages of thyme
Even the wisest sage comes to a spinach
Celery celery I say unto you
This is the cauliflower
When salsifiers all
Artichoke and kale.*

Joyce-speak, Milliganese, and Professor-Stanley-Unwinism all have a share in such cleverness. In his darker moments, Leale acknowledges the huge desolation of *Leviathan*—"your irredeemable dark chanting sounding within us"—and glimpses of intense loneliness keep surfacing throughout his book, but his chief commitment is to the pleasure-principle of improvisation.

I FIND IT DIFFICULT to see what principle Frank Kuppner is committed to in *A Bad Day for the Sung Dynasty*.¹² His own account of what he's up to can be quoted, for convenience, from a blurb which announces it as being "characteristically self-deprecating":

"This work consists of 501 4-line observations and 10 4-line observations on the verse form, which is taken from the common usage of translators of Chinese poetry, provoked by looking at the illustrations in Osvald Siren's *Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles* (London, Lund

Humphries, 1956-8), and feeling certain that the whole story was not being told. Many of them are supposed to be funny."

Supposed to be? Whether that's an invitation to laughter, or the Emperor's command, is not quite clear. Perhaps it's all part of the self-deprecation. Perhaps it means that if you're not laughing—or smiling inscrutably—you must be in league with those Li-po-faced reviewers who can't take a joke. But it is difficult to take one at such length. The "whole story" strikes me as adding up to an enterprise in cod-orientalism, as if a stand-up comic poet from the Versewaggon had hit upon the idea of doing a tour of the classiest Chinese restaurants. There's plenty of dead-pan wit and wisdom, much of it by courtesy of willow-pattern:

*It is a hard thing, deliberately to choose a cave
Inaccessible halfway up a cliff to meditate in,
And then glance down one morning in a state of comparative bliss
To discover a sea-level below, rising alarmingly.*

True. Many of these narrative vignettes—touching on themes of politics, art and philosophy—take a delight in the thought-provoking properties of bathos:

*In paradise, the collection of Buddhist sages,
Sitting in groups below stupendous pagodas,
With an expression of serenity on all faces,
Try to ignore a recent, unusually durable fart.*

A handful are genuinely haunting, particularly those which survey the landscape. They have a cryptic mysticism about them and are cloudy with a nice whisper of immanent knowledge withheld—"The host and the stone smile knowingly at each other"—but, *en masse*, to take a metaphor from over the way, you can't make Mount Fuji out of 501 mole-hills.

SHIVA NAIPAUL

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¹¹ *Leviathan*. By B. C. LEALE. Allison & Busby, £3.95.

¹² *A Bad Day for the Sung Dynasty*. By FRANK KUPPNER. Carcanet, £4.95.

Allen Curnow

Do Not Touch the Exhibits

A gulp of sea air, the train
bites off a beach, re-enters the rock.
A window, a blind cathode, greyly reflects,
Plato sits opposite, his nose in a map.
Where you're going's never what you see

and what you saw, was that where you went?
Is there a reef with an angler on it
whose rod makes a twitching U?
Has he landed his fat silver-gilt
dorado, smack! on a pan in the mind?

Why can't I cut corners and have them?
Daylight chips in again, with cypresses,
olives, loquat (*nespola* the Japan
medlar, not the one you eat rotten,
the other sort, butter-yellow, sweet

embedding slippery outsize pips),
artichokes, the native littoral
cultivations, rivermouth litter,
punctured cans, plastic bottles,
and behind (supposedly) the weatherish

pink and chrome villas gingerly
seated, shutters to seaward,
the Ligurian blue, too much of it.
Or weathering the long cape
another fisherman whose limping

boat I'm overhauling? a file
of red and white Martini sunbroillies
wheels in, peels off, drops back.
A brace of NATO frigates present
unmuzzled guns, "optional extras."

Beachcombings, introjections,
best stuffing for tunnels. Venus
on her lee-shore *poco mosso*
paroled from the Uffizi, screwed
to the wall under the baggage rack,

space reserved in the mind, goes
where I go, my side of the glass
beneath which our family motto's pinned,
è pericoloso sporgersi
indelibly incised on steel.

DISCUSSION

Urban/Zinoviev

Questions About a Strange Conversion

By *Sidney Hook*



ALEXANDER ZINOVIEV'S extraordinary views about the Soviet Union, and his current judgment about the strength and almost mystical coercion of the Soviet system on the psyche of its subjects ("Portrait of a Dissenter as a Soviet Man", *ENCOUNTER*, April and May 1984), are indeed difficult to explain. George Urban's searching questions seem to me to indicate some fatal flaws in Zinoviev's ana-

lysis. For one thing, they fail to explain his own sense of moral indignation which underlies the satirical sketches he has previously published about Soviet life: its systematic hypocrisies, gratuitous cruelties, and criminal indifference to the welfare of the population. It is hard to imagine that anyone sincerely convinced of Zinoviev's present views could have composed the series of works that led to his expulsion from the Soviet Union. He could not have felt himself such an integral part of the Soviet body politic or any of its cells, as he now professes to feel, and write as he did. When he tells us that he was so much a part of the group in which back-biting, informing, envy, malice and *Schadenfreude* were so rife that "I would have sacrificed my life for any" of its members, I simply do not believe him.

It is obvious that Zinoviev has changed his mind in some key respects about the Soviet Union since his arrival in the West. I cannot find anything in the behaviour of the Soviet Union, or any change in the patterns of its internal oppression, that would justify such a sea-change in Zinoviev's judgment.

I do not know enough about Zinoviev or his present conditions of life to venture on any psychological explanation

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of the causes of his shift in judgment. I content myself with pointing out some difficulties in accepting the truth of his current view.

1. The first difficulty is to square it with the historical and empirical record. When did this syndrome of Communist group loyalty take hold of the peoples of Russia? Surely it could not have been during the first decade of civil war nor during the second decade of agricultural collectivisation, enforced starvation, and mass purges. (After all, as Dr Lewis Gann has pointed out, there was far more resistance to the imposition of Communism on Russia than there was resistance to Nazism in Germany.) Nor can the emergence of the new Communist man with the characteristics attributed to him by Zinoviev be explained as a consequence of the Second World War. For the War was waged in the name of patriotism, in defence of the Motherland with all its holy symbols, rather than in defence of Communism. And surely the new sense of group loyalty could not have triumphed during the post-War "de-Stalinisation" period when millions of shattered men and women were released from the concentration camps, and detailed revelations about the experiences in those camps began to flood the country. Is it at all likely that even those who suffered less than Anton Antonov-Ovseyenko felt as Zinoviev now says he feels about Soviet power and the great collectivity in which all individuality is submerged?

2. The second difficulty is to explain why more than 24 years after October 1917 so many millions of Russians voluntarily joined the Nazi invaders of the Soviet Union as auxiliaries, and why as many or more surrendered to the Third Reich without fighting to the end. Were these not also "Soviet men"? To be sure, with the memory of the crimes of the Allied powers in turning over to Stalin countless numbers of former inhabitants of the Soviet Union for exile and execution still fresh, it is implausible to expect large-scale defections from the Soviet ranks in the future. This hardly constitutes evidence of uncoerced devotion and loyalty to the Soviet régime on the part of its subjects.

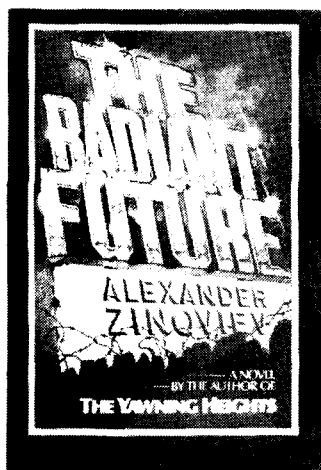
3. Thirdly, over the last decades some tens of thousands of former subjects of the Soviet Union have made their way to the West or been permitted to emigrate. Although unhappy in many cases because of the difficulties of readjustment, the vast majority show no inclination to return to the emotional and psychological security of the Soviet collectivity; nor do they betray the nostalgia for participatory reunion with their erstwhile co-workers and neighbours that Zinoviev avows. How did they escape the mesmerising effect of Soviet power?

4. Finally, if the Soviet authorities were even half convinced of the validity of Zinoviev's analysis, why would they go to such enormous trouble and expense to pen their subjects in? It is not likely that the Kremlin would be unaware of the truth of Zinoviev's account if it were the truth. After all, as Zinoviev has himself explained in great detail, the Kremlin has many and excellent sources of learning how the populace feels and thinks. The only legitimate inference is that *they* do not have the same faith in the efficacy of the myth "about the new Soviet man" to ensure the loyalty of the Soviet people as Zinoviev has.¹

¹ I owe some of the points I have made above to conversation with my colleague, Dr Lewis Gann.

Can One “Enjoy” the Gulag?

By Charles Janson



ALEXANDER ZINOVIEV is a Soviet mathematical logician with one of the naughtiest minds in the history of literature, a man whose satire stems from a logic different from Dr Urban's. Small wonder their dialogue is so startling. Nicolai Berdyaev once said that nearly all books about Soviet Communism were valueless. He found René Fülöp-Miller's *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism* (1927) near the mark; I believe there were one or two others. Berdyaev died in 1948. Since then we

have had some fine histories, as well as the growth of Sovietology, now considerably more than a cottage-industry. Sovieticians not only write voluminously and teach; they even assist in government. But despite all their efforts Bolshevism remains a grey subject that repels the large public and exhausts busy politicians who are required, in principle, to tackle it but find no time to read Leonard Schapiro or Robert Conquest. So it is something of a boon when a new bright star rises in the *ars sovietica* to shine through the Soviet and Communist murk.

Zinoviev is a rather strange case in modern literary history. When *The Yawning Heights* came out in English in 1978, the anglophone critics cried to a man: “Hats off, gentlemen, a genius!”, saying the book was about the best thing since *Gulliver's Travels*. But only one of Zinoviev's five subsequent sociological satires (*The Radiant Future*) has yet appeared in English, although everything is translated automatically into French and a good deal into other languages. This gap will soon be filled; but the delay suggests that the author is tough going, even for lovers of satire.

As the dialogue with George Urban reveals, Zinoviev is a philosopher-logician who makes high claims for his system. He insists not only on his descriptive concepts but on his dialectical logical method—even asserting that, given laboratory and staff, he could predict the operation of “Soviet social laws.” In *The Reality of Communism* Zinoviev briefly describes this method. He finds conventional Western analytical efforts either paralytic or hopelessly erratic. No Westerner has ever

CHARLES JANSON is the translator of Alexander Zinoviev's “*The Reality of Communism*”, published this spring by Victor Gollancz in London and Schocken Books in New York, and has recently completed a translation of his “*Homo Sovieticus*.”

been able to predict any Soviet event (whereas he himself predicted the invasion of Afghanistan in an address to the American Club in Munich a few months before it happened).

Whether it is feasible to make a mathematical model of a society, I cannot judge. But I am sure that we should pay great attention to Professor Zinoviev's descriptions of Soviet society, because they are the first of their type to come from an insider with a scientific training. I am a Zinovievist, too, because this scientist-satirist can illustrate his grand theory so magnificently in fiction. His masterpiece is *Zholty Dom* (*The Yellow House*, i.e. “The Madhouse”). This novel of 770 pages is a series of conversations and soliloquies on recurrent themes, which are the themes of Soviet existence. They are presented in various *locales*: the Academic Institute, the Collective Farm at harvest-time, the Sanatorium, during strolls in Moscow. There are many flashbacks too to the 1941-45 War in which Zinoviev fought as an infantry-man—for a time he was in a “punishment battalion”—and later as a bomber-pilot. The War was the first moral climax of his life; an experience which made it impossible for him to become squarely anti-Soviet; or even totally anti-Stalinist (for, in the event, it was Stalin's institutions that were not found wanting).

ONE OF THE MORE startling moments in the Urban-Zinoviev dialogue is the Russian's statement that the collectivisation of agriculture was justified; and that the death and suffering it caused were “tragic but not criminal.” For me the last sentence is a misuse of words. Nevertheless the statement is in line with Zinoviev's opinion that when the Russian Revolution *had* occurred and the Civil War was finished (the Revolution being neither pre-ordained, “scientific”, or desirable in character), nothing but Collectivism could follow. Further, that to install it and so institutionalise the Revolution there was needed a practical dialectician of genius. Further still, that Sovietism is to be regarded *both* as an absolute historical disaster *and* as a relative practical success.

Sovietism is a very strange if not esoteric subject. It needs, I think, such audacious paradoxes as Zinoviev continuously provides. They cross the boundaries of Aristotelian logic, but one feels they have their own logic. The Western mind, the author contends, misses the reality of an amoral, dialectical social system because it tries (instinctively) to make its own sense of it, which is of course not the system's sense. This cognitive failure has serious diplomatic and military consequences, for Westerners faced with Soviet “chaos” begin to talk chaotically themselves, holding, for instance, that the Soviet Union is terrible and dangerous but likely to collapse fairly soon “because it can't go on like that.” Resort is then had to wishful clichés about economic collapse, religious revivals, and ethnic disruption. This sort of error can only be avoided by making dialectical, multi-linear approaches to Soviet reality.

Zinoviev's documentary fiction is brilliant and compendious. The spectrum of his characters ranges between the type who plays the system flat out for his or her own benefit and the desperate loner who tries to avoid it altogether. In *The Yellow House* a prize specimen of the first is Matrena Doura, the squalid, resourceful and humorous female peasant. An instance of the second is MNS (junior scientific assistant) who

ends up with a 25-year sentence to the camps. In between there is a whole gallery of people who are "Soviet-skinned"; who survive as best they can in a society that is subject to no consistent behavioural standards.

Zinoviev is at his most illuminating about ideology; and at his funniest about the Ideology Industry which is manned by an army of third-rate academics churning out the necessary on demand. But he holds that without ideology there can be no Soviet Union; and that if it collapses so will Sovietism.

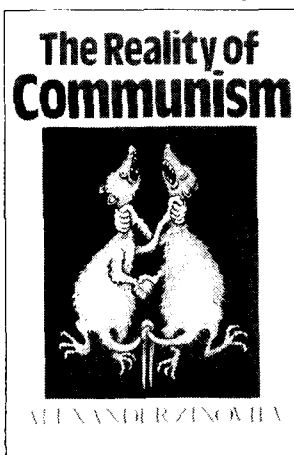
Was it Sir Isaiah Berlin who likened the Soviet Union to a prep-school that never broke up; and added that, as to free speech, etc., one would hardly expect to find a criticism of the headmaster in the school magazine? Renan said: *La Russie, c'est le néant*. Igor Stravinsky once addressed students at Harvard on early Soviet music. He concluded (*La poétique musicale*, translated as *The Poetics of Music*, 1942):

"If the reeling of Russia through the course of history disorientates me to the point of making my head swim, the perspectives of Russian musical art disconcert me no less. For art presupposes a culture, an upbringing, an integral stability of the intellect; and Russia of today has never been more completely devoid of these."

Alas, it is the same now. Soviet Russia is obsessed by the West but still turns its back on it. It seems to me that all Westerners can do is take a close clinical and sympathetic interest. Tibor Szamuely used to say that one should try to enjoy the Soviet Union for, after all, it had its human and funny sides. Alexander Zinoviev, who always describes himself as "a typical Soviet man", is one who enables us to enjoy the Soviet scene. That he is such a guide is one of the measures of his greatness.

A Dialectical Paradox

By Konstanty Jeleński



THE ZINOVIEV ARGUMENT can be reduced to the assertion that the Soviet system is essentially different from the rest of the world, that *Homo Sovieticus* is a "new man", though different from the one heralded by Marxist predictions. Now, this is surely old stuff, familiar to people of our generation. Western fellow-travellers were fascinated by Stalinism for no other reason. With the exception of a few moronic "idealists", they knew about

the crimes, the horrors, the nightmare. What impressed them was the scale of this undertaking, its sheer power; and they expected something new and exciting from so tremendous an experiment. Totalitarianism impressed its staunchest adversaries: was not Hannah Arendt convinced that totalitarian systems would crumble if one single brick were subtracted from their tightly-knit structures?

More curiously, the very victims of the Communist system derived pride and consolation from the "novelty" of their plight. The sense of superiority (albeit ambiguous) of Slavs, and Russians in particular, over Western "bourgeois materialists" and "decadent Europeans" existed (like so much else in the Russian-Soviet chain of events) long before the Revolution. But it took a new form from the self-imbedded conviction that the *Diamat* (dialectical materialism) is a system of higher initiation, conferring a new and bitter wisdom upon the adept, while the cleverest and wildest "capitalistic" politician, banker, operator, or even crook would for ever remain an innocent greenhorn.

NO NEED TO STUDY Marx or Engels—the very fact of breathing *Diamat* air was deemed sufficient. Let me remind you of a story written by the late Polish writer Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, entitled "Taking Off", conceived as an answer to Albert Camus' *The Fall*. The story is told by a drunkard in a seedy bar—a story of war, murders, concentration camps, tortures and treasons. At one point, the narrator roars with laughter, reminiscing about "some French writer" who has problems over a girl whom he didn't save when she jumped into the Seine—evidently a typical case of capitalistic scruples.

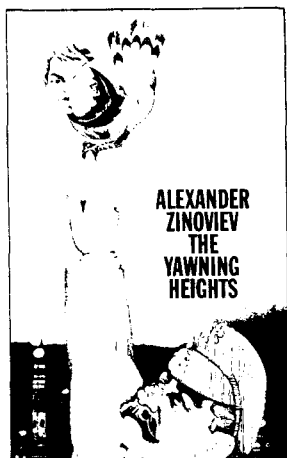
Let me put it differently. In the 1970s, I would ask my young intellectual friends from Poland to explain a paradox which worried me. How was it possible that, under this abhorred régime, Polish culture had attained—in nearly every field—a level superior to pre-War years? The answer was that I attached an undue importance to what a tiny artistic and intellectual élite had achieved in spite of overwhelming difficulties, that I had no idea of the disastrous situation of the whole nation: incapable and opportunistic professionals; totally alienated peasants; demoralised, drunken, and broken workers. Then came the summer of 1980, and the renaissance of *Solidarity*...

While Poland is a specific case in the Soviet camp, I have no doubt that sooner or later the Russian people will similarly give the lie to Dr Zinoviev's philosophy, a belated form of Lysenkoism.

KONSTANTY JELEŃSKI left his native Poland in December 1939 to join the Polish Army in the West. In the early 1950s, he joined the Secretariat of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Paris, and the editorial committee of "Preuves." In 1973 he became administrator of Jacques Monod's Centre Royaumont pour une Science de l'Homme, and from 1976 joined l'Institut National de l'Audiovisuel. He is the editor and translator into French of an anthology of Polish poetry and of a collection of poems by Czesław Miłosz. His collected essays, written in Polish, were first published in Cracow in 1981 by the independent publishing house Kos.

A "Great-Russian" Delusion

By William E. Griffith



PROFESSOR ZINOVIEV is a Slavophile but also a Great-Russian nationalist of a "scientistic" variety. That is to say, he is a "syncretist." His ideas are a remarkable mixture, seasoned with that Slavophile arrogance *vis-à-vis* the West that was characteristic of such radical, rationalist figures as Chernyshevsky and of Alexander III's super-reactionary mentor Pobedonostev.

Zinoviev's mix is peculiar because it is, in part, super-rationalist. He declares that he is "the only man" who has access to "objective universal laws", and value-free ones at that, which enable him (but not Western Kremlinological "charlatans") to predict the Soviet future; and, indeed, were he given several bright assistants for several years, he could produce a computer model of Soviet society. Yet he is in some sense also anti-rational, for he speaks of post-Kantian and post-Hegelian *Verstehen*—the ability to "feel" oneself into a society which (he declares) he—but no Westerner—has.

Like all Slavophile Great-Russians, Zinoviev is obsessed with the weakness and decline of, and discrimination against, the Great-Russians. That the Great-Russians are discriminated "against", and that the Jews and the Ukrainians receive "favourable discrimination", will be news to most Ukrainians and Jews, inside or outside the Soviet Union. Nor does it help them, I think, or the world, or even the Soviet people, when he protests his abhorrence of "anti-Jewishism" just after he has referred to the Jewish "mafia-like character." (With such friends one needs no enemies.) He concludes with a paean of praise to Stalin's achievements and a prediction that Western liberal democracy will not last much longer.

What is one to make of all this? First, it is very "Great-Russian." Alas, the "Westerners" (like Turgenev and Herzen) did not win out over the Slavophiles (like Dostoevsky and Tolstoy). Nor have they ever, in Russian history—nor are they ever likely to. Slavophiles are no more attractive, only more

ridiculous, when they garnish themselves (as Professor Zinoviev does) with this literally megalomaniacal scientism.

What a curious mixture of emotion, chauvinism, and scientism! It does indeed give one pause, for if this is a sample of what has happened to a famous Russian dissident's "Slavophilia", things are badly off indeed. But then, Professor Zinoviev is a mathematical logician—and Alexander Solzhenitzyn is a novelist. They may well more reflect the views of their kind in the Soviet Union than does Dr Sakharov; and if so, they appropriately will disillusion more of us in the West about the prospects for the Russian future. But they should not make us despair of the creativity of Russian culture. The Soviet dissident movement has shown that, like the retreat of a glacier, the best—and the worst—of Russian political traditions, which remained in suspended animation, under the ice, re-emerge when the glacier recedes. A few of them are as obscurantist, arrogant, chauvinist, indeed as megalomaniacal as Professor Zinoviev; but others are as liberal, tolerant, and humanist as Professor Sakharov. Distance does give *distance*; politics is an art, not a science; and, finally, Russia may some time again contribute to our culture as much, or more, as it did in the past.

One should neither be too hopeful, nor certainly too pessimistic. At the end George Urban remarks, in effect, that liberty is its own justification and its own reward. I count myself with those who with Thomas Jefferson have "sworn eternal hostility to every form of tyranny over the mind of man." Professor Zinoviev, clearly, has not.

Strange Compensations

By Paul Hollander



THE CONVERSATIONS between George Urban and Alexander Zinoviev recently published in *ENCOUNTER* are among the most remarkable and morbidly fascinating cultural-intellectual documents of our times. They

illuminate the gulf between the values and standards of judgment of people who have been shaped by the West and those who are the products of Soviet society, including those among the latter who became critical of it and left it.

The case of Alexander Zinoviev suggests that even if you are a critic of the Soviet system you cannot spend a lifetime in Soviet society without some impairment of what Westerners regard as reasonable, morally and intellectually coherent standards of judgment. The professed views of Alexander Zinoviev at any rate show that, despite his opposition to the régime, which culminated in his departure from the Soviet Union, he has absorbed and internalised a wide range of Soviet values and attitudes. Not even a man of his intellect, erudition,

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and eminence could escape the impact of his political-cultural environment. For that reason the conversations conflict with the optimistic conventional wisdom in the West: the belief that the Soviet system cannot permanently or severely warp the minds of people, and especially those with higher education.

I am not suggesting that much of what Zinoviev has to say about the Soviet system does not make sense; much of it does—and even dovetails with the views of at least a segment of the Western scholarly community (although Zinoviev vigorously dismisses *all* Western assessments of Soviet society as totally inadequate). What is most striking about the opinions expressed by Zinoviev is the bizarre blend of insight and error, sophistication and confusion and, above all, the profusion of startling inconsistencies. Underlying and perhaps decisively conditioning this welter of ideas and propositions is Zinoviev's self-identification as a social scientist and his firm belief that iron-clad laws of history and social life exist and are there to be discovered (or have already been discovered). Such a belief, as readers of this journal know, was confidently held in early and mid-19th-century Europe; few social scientists or thinkers have since those days subscribed to it. Zinoviev's beliefs provide new evidence that Soviet society has frozen the kinds of intellectual currents and developments which in the West have rid us of the belief that immutable laws of history and social existence could be found.

Such a belief is of course also linked to an environment saturated with debased versions of Marxism, which aver that there are clear-cut laws governing social life and historical events. In the case of Zinoviev these beliefs are inseparable from a grandiose self-conception of *the* scientist of Soviet society. Thus Zinoviev says that:

"The correlations I establish have the force of natural laws. . . . I am probably the only man in the world who has developed his own sociological framework for the comprehension of Soviet society. . . . I have spent thirty years investigating Soviet society; I have obtained results. My sole ambition is that these results should be known in the world as 'Zinoviev results' and my theory as 'Zinoviev's theory of the Soviet system.' . . . The Soviet Union resembles in most of its features a mechanical system. Most facts about Soviet society can be counted and fed into a computer."

He also asserts that his theory leads him to a "mathematical model of Communist society" and that "the laws emerging from my theory have the force of the laws of physics. They are objective universal laws."

The scientific posture is also helpful in relieving Zinoviev of moral concerns and criteria—human suffering, oppression, and massacres become historical phenomena which one must contemplate with equanimity, since presumably it is all a matter of inexorably unfolding social laws. ("Human sacrifice" is a morally loaded notion. It is inadmissible when

talking about history. Morality does not enter the picture. History happened as it happened. My job is to take account of it and analyse its consequences. . . .")

It is always tempting to speculate about the psychological functions and sources of strange beliefs. I think that the exaltation of the role of the social scientist has in general something to do with the desire to control through a hoped-for, imaginary, and powerful knowledge that would unlock all secrets of the social universe and make human behaviour predictable and thus controllable. One may further speculate that a lifetime spent in Soviet society and the corresponding sense of powerlessness may also contribute to a subterranean growth of the urge to power—in this case via the role of the social scientist who masters knowledge which could give him ultimate control over society and may even make him an equal to the actual rulers.

FURTHER, IN A COUNTRY such as the Soviet Union was under Stalin when Zinoviev grew up, not only were most people totally powerless, but their lives were also, in many ways, unpredictable. Hence there may be a compensatory element in Zinoviev's belief in the universal laws of social development, which, if unravelled and applied, would obviously represent the ultimate end of unpredictability, arbitrariness, and disorder.

On the other hand, his grandiose notions of "social science" notwithstanding, Zinoviev is far from deluded about certain essentials of Soviet society. He is right in emphasising that the system is stable and that the personality of particular leaders no longer matters a great deal (contrary to recurrent Western hopes); that most people readily accept it; that it has staying power; that it has developed a powerful war-making machine which it uses for political ends; that it is dangerous to the West ("For a régime that is still uncertain of its legitimacy . . . it is an article of faith that military power has to be maximised at whatever cost"); and that Soviet people cannot easily grasp the notion of individual rights.

At the same time he apparently cannot make up his mind as to whether or not the Soviet system is sick or strong, healthy or moribund; and he overflows with ambivalence when it comes to the assessment of Stalin and his times.

" . . . a time of idealism, dedication and even heroism. We had an aim in life and fought for it. It is not often in history that one can do that . . . if I were to choose between living in the truly terrible epoch of Stalin and a blander and more comfortable age, I would without hesitation choose Stalin's."

Besides the conception of himself as superior scientist, another factor that may explain the peculiarities and contradictions of Zinoviev's position is his Russian nationalism, which shines through in these interviews. This nationalism explains his unhappiness with living in the West, his rootlessness and felt social isolation, all of which add up to a basically anti-Western stance. His ambivalence toward the Soviet system cannot be understood without taking full measure of his ambivalence toward the West:

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"I now live in Western Europe. I have plenty to eat, I have a decent apartment, and possess three suits—but believe me, I would give all that, and more, if I could once again be part of a Soviet collective. . . . I live in intellectual segregation, as most Frenchmen and Americans and Germans do too . . . each in his overheated, overfurnished, personal ghetto . . . each fighting the depression and despair that comes from satiety, isolation and the lack of higher collective purpose."

It is hard not to feel a degree of sympathy toward this complaint and the person voicing it. Zinoviev does have a point. Thoughtful observers of Western society have for decades, if not centuries, commented on the price we pay for freedom, rationality, individualism and the multiplicity of choices open to us. Zinoviev's limited appreciation of these somewhat problematic assets and advantages is understandable.

Yet ultimately his attitudes may be read as yet another substantiation of the "Escape from Freedom" thesis.

Yawning Depths

By Paul Lendvai



ALEXANDER ZINOVIEV'S testimony in his fascinating interview with George Urban is a mixture of brilliant and relevant, outrageous and irrelevant observations. The whole argument is also, I feel, imbued with a certain cynicism as if, indeed, it were part of a clever public relations operation aimed at maintaining the interest of a highly

competitive and increasingly saturated market in the person and ideas of a Soviet Professor of Philosophy.

While I agree with some of his views on Western attitudes towards, and Western knowledge about, the Soviet Union, I would like to pick out only a couple of dangerously misleading observations about Eastern Europe and the Soviet empire.

His remarks about Poland remind me of Lenin's warning that if you scratch a Bolshevik you'll find a Great-Russian chauvinist. Take, for example, his statement:

"A considerable section of the Polish people may well feel

unhappy with the Socialist régime as it is at the moment, but the vast majority of Poles nevertheless accept the system. Otherwise the system would have been swept away."

What an incredible conclusion after Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, and Poland 1980-81! The Hungarian system was swept away in a few days despite the "power of habit and vested interests . . . of the oligarchy." It was saved, or rather reconstructed, only by the sheer military power of the Soviet Union. Professor Zinoviev seems to know nothing about the aspirations of nations and minorities seething with hatred (there is no other word for it) against what they regard as an oppressive, insensitive, inflexible, and hopelessly out-of-date Russian colonial power. Not "communism versus democracy", but national emancipation versus colonial domination is and has been always the key issue in post-World War II Eastern Europe.

Fears of Soviet intervention and of a blood-bath were the key restraining factors even at the high point of *Solidarity's* activities. And conversely, the fear of massive Polish resistance—and stronger doubts than those apparently felt by Zinoviev about the "unenthusiastic cooperation" of the Polish armed forces—prevented a reckless, total, and violent Soviet intervention.

Equally superficial and flippant is his remark that Eastern Europe would "regain its independence as a *result* [Zinoviev's italics] of the Soviet empire expiring—not as one of the principal causes." One simply cannot separate external and internal factors. The assessment of the degree of danger which a given situation posed to Soviet hegemony has always been a major, occasionally even decisive factor in Soviet internal power struggles. It is enough to mention such political earthquakes as 17 June 1953 in East Germany, the prelude to and the aftermath of the Hungarian uprising, and the Polish October in 1956, coupled with the already available evidence about dissension in the Soviet leadership over these issues, to realise how detached Zinoviev's "one-dimensional, Russia-centred" views are from the complex political, social, and economic realities of an ideologically structured empire.

Finally, what can one say about his "forecast" that the Communist system will survive the collapse of the Soviet empire and "eventually embrace the whole of mankind"? The collapse of an empire would shatter to smithereens the artificially constructed legitimacy of the ruling party and its given leadership. Zinoviev's assertions that the Russian people could attain, under a Communist system but not within the empire, prosperity and happiness are "provocative", but scarcely merit substantive comment.

To sum up: Alexander Zinoviev, if and when he controls, or forgets, or puts aside his obsession with the allegedly oppressed and under-represented Russian people, can still produce some brilliant insights into the workings of Soviet society. But when he turns to the mentality and wishes of the 110 million non-Russian and non-Soviet but Central and East European peoples living east of the Elbe, when he engages in sweeping forecasts about the character and future of Communism, the Soviet empire, and mankind as a whole, even avid Zinoviev readers and admirers of *The Yawning Heights* are tempted to recall that ignorance is not a privilege of Western Sovietologists. These were yawning depths.

PAUL LENDVAI, Hungarian-born head of the East Europe programmes of Austrian radio and television, is a frequent visitor to Eastern Europe and is the author of several books on the area; his last, *The Bureaucracy of Truth: How Communist Governments Manage the News*, was published in 1981 in Britain, the US, Germany and France. He is also co-publisher and Editor of the Vienna quarterly journal, *Europäische Rundschau*.

AUTHORS & CRITICS

“To plagiarise, or to purloin, or to borrow. . . .”?

A Reply to R. W. Burchfield—By LAURENCE URDANG



THE LEXICOGRAPHERS and publishers of dictionaries not bearing the imprint of Oxford University Press should feel flattered that the august Robert W. Burchfield has deigned to take cognisance of their efforts, though the casual observer might venture to regard his piece, “Dictionaries, New & Old”, in the September/October ENCOUNTER, somewhat *infra dig*. It is also riddled with errors, misconceptions, and misinterpretations concerning (at the very least) the dictionaries with which I have had more than a passing acquaintance. As I am unqualified to comment on *Webster’s Third International* and *Webster’s Ninth Collegiate vis-à-vis* the *OED*, I shall confine my remarks to the other dictionaries that have come under scrutiny in that article.

First, I shall try, as briefly as possible, to set the record straight:

1. The rights for the unfettered use of material from the *American College Dictionary (ACD)* were made available to Paul Hamlyn in the mid-1960s for a Britishised version; ably edited by Patrick W. Hanks, it appeared in 1971 as the *Encyclopedic World Dictionary (EWD)*. In the late 1970s, permission was granted for an Australian edition of that work, which appeared as *The Macquarie Dictionary*, in 1981. These three dictionaries, sold in entirely different and mutually exclusive markets, are obviously and unashamedly similar, for they are simply different versions of the same work. Acknowledgment of the “derivativeness” (as Mr Burchfield so quaintly puts it) of the second to the first and of the third to the first two is set forth in their front matter and copyright pages in accordance with whatever agreement was drawn between the respective publishers. Rights to every kind of work—book, film, gramophone record, and all other copyrightable items—are constantly interchanged among companies that cater to different markets round the world, and there is nothing odd, suspicious, reprehensible, underhanded, or illegal in that activity. The manner in which the acknowledgments are set forth, both in wording and in prominence—and, in fact, whether they are required at all—is a matter between the owners and the purchasers of the rights; it is not, conceivably, any of Mr Burchfield’s business.

Thus, it would appear that the mystery surrounding the “revelation” of similarities among the three dictionaries is cleared up—if, indeed, it ever was a mystery in the mind of anyone but Mr Burchfield, considering the ineluctable fact that

the “indebtedness”, as he so archly puts it, was there for all to see.

2. The case of the *Random House Dictionary* (college edition) (*RHD*) and the *Collins English Dictionary (CED)* is entirely different. Going back a bit, Mr Burchfield seems to be totally unaware that the *ACD*, edited by Clarence L. Barnhart and published by Random House in 1947, was based in large part on an abridged edition of the *Century Dictionary & Cyclopedia*. That work, a massive, ten-volume dictionary published in 1889 (revised editions appeared till 1911), was prepared in America under the direction of William Dwight Whitney, a scholar of international repute and professor of linguistics at Yale University. In the late 1920s, Appleton-Century-Crofts, successors to the Century Company (the original publisher), prepared a two-volume abridgment of the large dictionary. Despite its quality, the abridgment enjoyed only a modest success, probably because it was not easy to use: in their efforts to demonstrate the semantic development of each word, the editors had stripped out most of the definition numbers, substituting what amounted to a telegraphically succinct collection of semantic elements. Scholarly though that method might have been, it held little appeal for the general public.

Random House acquired the rights to use material from this *Century* abridgment for the *ACD*. In 1959, when the planning of what was to become *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language—Unabridged Edition* was begun, negotiations were concluded with Appleton-Century-Crofts to extend the rights granted for the *ACD* to the new dictionary. Hence, many of the definitions of the (basic) words common to the *ACD* and the *RHD* (all editions) are similar if not identical to one another, and to those in the *Century* abridgment as well.

When the preparation of the *CED* was begun, under my direction, in the early 1970s, I acquired the rights to use any material I wished from the (old, ten-volume) *Century*, and we drew on it freely, chiefly, of course, for definitions of general vocabulary. In most well-balanced modern dictionaries, the coverages of general vocabulary and of scientific, technical, and specialised vocabulary are about equal in volume. As it is useless to try to pick up fully half of the material from a dictionary prepared a century earlier, all of such matter must be researched and written afresh. But there seems little advantage in creating new definitions for the other half of the dictionary provided that the definitions in a source work are acceptable.

The similarities between the *RHD* and the *CED* can be thus accounted for: to some extent, both were ultimately derived from the same source, though independently. There was nothing illegal, plagiaristic, or even mildly shady about it. As the agreements with Appleton-Century-Crofts (and, in the 1970s, with Prentice-Hall Publishers, who had since acquired that company) did not require any acknowledgment, none was given. Besides, the users of dictionaries are more interested in being presented with serviceable information about the lexicon of the language than in engaging in comparative lexicographical research.

So much for Mr Burchfield's insinuations of hanky-panky.

AS FOR his more serious accusations of plagiarism, it may be useful to cite here (again) the definition in the *OED* which was quoted in the earlier article in ENCOUNTER:

"the wrongful appropriation or purloining and publication as one's own, of the ideas, or the expression of the

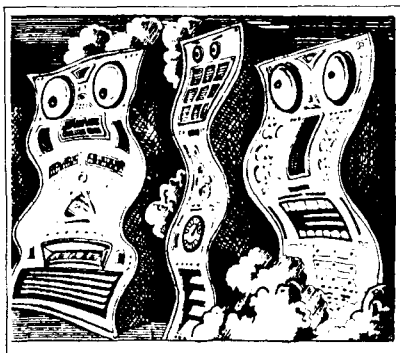
ideas (literary, artistic, musical, mechanical, etc.) of another. . . ."

In this context, it seems hardly necessary to repeat the point that the key word is "wrongful": when one has the permission of the owner of the idea, there is nothing wrongful to be drawn into question.

More to the point, perhaps, is the question of whether it is plagiarism to appropriate or purloin and publish as one's own the ideas of others *even if the source is acknowledged*. In a legal sense—at least in the modern interpretations familiar to me—the publication of another's work without permission is plagiarism *prima facie*, whether acknowledgment is made or not. In other words, if someone publishes, without permission, a work or part of a work copyrighted by another (excepting brief excerpts), notwithstanding an acknowledgment of indebtedness, he is contravening and violating the other's right and thereby lays himself open to a lawsuit if he hasn't obtained the copyright owner's express permission, for which he may often be asked to pay a fee.

Mr Burchfield's contention that similarities—even identities—of treatment and text in the *EWD* and *Macquarie vis-à-*

Logos Takes Over the Word



Hanover

"**L**OGOS", first exhibited here at the Hanover international fair, represents a triumph for the mathematical formulae, "algorithms", first worked out by American specialists at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1946. It is a translating machine run by a handy little computer; and it will doubtless put more speed, efficiency, and know-how into a whole host of European enterprise.

The vocabulary of the Wang machine, which translates from German into English, consists of 20,000 words. The director of Logos Computer Systems (of New Bedford, Massachusetts) has reassured one and all here that the accuracy of the translation is so high that only some 10% of the final text needs to be edited by "human hand." What has finally been achieved, after many rough starts, is the capacity of the programme to "tune in" on certain mental complexities in the use of language and thus capture the essence of meanings which might be

otherwise misunderstood and mistranslated. To "translate" is not necessarily to "traduce."

Logos's vocabulary can be augmented by some 50 words for a specialised area of technical concern; and it operates according to the standard spelling and usages of Germany's "Duden" dictionary. It knows its prepositions and will make the proper corrections when the Hanover firm is dispatching a shipment of goods "onto" (read: "to") the United States. But it is not a stylist. Out of bad German it will not be able to make good English.

STILL, THE CODES in the Logos programme are remarkable in getting the literal meaning right, and behind it there is the verbal insurance of some 256 special semantic categories. Take the German word *verlegen*. It has many meanings and different usages, but the machine evidently gets them all correctly rendered. Thus the key to the library can be misplaced (*verlegen*), which would make the librarian look very embarrassed (*verlegen*); he blames it on the confusion caused by the cables which were being laid (*verlegen*); but still, how should one get at all the books which have been published (*verlegen*)?

Each of these, individually, can be coped with; but take them all together, as in the above, and Logos will inevitably need *homo sapiens* to help it puzzle out when "ein Verleger verlegen wird" because "alle seine beste verlegte Bücher verlegt waren. . . ." Thus, Logos will be of small use when it comes to translating subtleties in literature or intellectual texts. It is intended to deal

efficiently and speedily with instruction handbooks, collections of technical documents, or a firm's average daily correspondence. It knows how to deal with things, with terminology, with declarative sentences; but not with ideas, or with feelings, ironies, jokes, impressions, or reflections.

SO THE HUMAN TRANSLATOR is not yet obsolete. One is doubtful even here, in this technical Utopia, that a machine will yet be devised to handle the ultimate jobs. The next models of the Logos machine will clearly have much larger vocabularies, will be able to adjust more quickly to more specialised fields, will learn faster and permanently. It already works tirelessly through the night, and in the morning the hundred pages or so are translated in quite satisfactory renderings. The English is clear, concise, accurate. With Logos plugged in, a vital job will be well done; productivity should go up; and one or two more poor chaps join the unemployed. But they, or their cousins in America, may get newly-created places with expanding Logos Computers in New Bedford, Mass. Or they can shift gear and go into translating best sellers, or to doing the tricky dubbing of texts for language-synchronised TV hits like *Dallas*, *Dynasty*, and *Kojak*.

The machine, good as it is, has its limitations—and human intelligence still rules.

A.S.

in the FRANKFURTER
ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG

vis the *ACD*, and in the *RHD* and *CED*, are suggestive of the results of having been “furtively copied or covertly concealed” borders on libel, especially in light of what I have revealed about permission agreements and common sources.

By implication, he tries to convey the impression that his research and scholarship are impeccable, which I should not dare to question; yet I suggest that his repeated references to medieval texts are entirely irrelevant to the issues raised in his article. Moreover, had he taken the trouble to pursue his research a simple, logical step further by asking me about the “coincidences” he found among the dictionaries with which I have been involved, I should have been happy to have provided him with the foregoing information, sparing him the embarrassment of seeing publication of his false and misleading innuendos.

MR BURCHFIELD SEEMS to be quite content in his belief that it is perfectly all right to appropriate and purloin the ideas and materials of others as long as the source is credited. I submit that in questions of plagiarism the attribution of source is irrelevant, and I believe that my view is supported by law.

The *OED* was prepared and published to document the history of the English lexicon. Much of it is not copyright (under the laws of any country), and lexicographers have traditionally had recourse to it as an excellent and generally accurate resource for certain parts of the English word stock. Good lexicographers have resorted to the *OED* to supplement their own citation files and other sources and, usually, have seen fit to interpret or use the information so gleaned to suit themselves and the style of their works.

The dictionaries published in the 20th century, to which Mr Burchfield refers, were prepared as practical works of reference for the lay public, not for linguists, scholars in the history of the English language, or specialists in English lexicography. The average user cares little, I think, for detailed documentation of the sources used in compiling his dictionary as long as he is satisfied that the scholarship used in its preparation was properly authoritative. Moreover, if a citation for a particular sense of a word is required, and the *OED*, employed as a secondary source, shows it to have occurred in the writings of Dryden, Milton, Pope, or anyone else, why must the compiler of a new dictionary be compelled to go to the original Dryden, Milton, or Pope materials (unless it is to verify that the quotation in the *OED* was accurately transcribed)? Is it not the very function of the *OED* to provide such information? And, as for pinching material from other dictionaries, did not the editors of the *OED* themselves use the definitions of other

dictionaries—some of them in copyright, like the *Century Dictionary* after 1889—as fodder for its own citations? As I suggested above, acknowledgment of a source does nothing to remove the stigma of plagiarism.

Mr Burchfield, I fear, has done himself and the *OED* a disservice by attacking those who are the most consistent users and supporters of the *OED*, who derive the greatest benefits from it, and who labour mightily to pass on to the general public, in assimilable form, some of the vast wealth of information contained in the *OED*. In so doing, he has revealed himself only as a harmful drudge.

P.S. In the event that Mr Burchfield (or anyone else) wishes to pursue his line of investigation into other books prepared under my direction, virtually all of which are in computer-readable form, he may turn his attention to the 110 or so dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other reference works published since 1972.

Robert Burchfield Replies

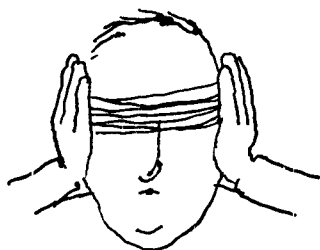
I MUST SAY AT ONCE that there was no question of plagiarism—neither stated nor implied—in the relationships of the various dictionaries mentioned by Laurence Urdang. My own title for the article (as for the lecture in Toronto before it) was “The Genealogy of Dictionaries.” I just want to encourage a little more openness about the sources and relationships of new dictionaries, and am pleased to see Mr Urdang, a distinguished lexicographer of great experience, now setting out the genealogy of several dictionaries in an unmistakable manner. This more open approach can do nothing but good.

I cannot leave the matter, however, without making an unqualified apology to the Editor and publishers of *Webster's Ninth Collegiate*. I expected to find an acknowledgment of some kind to the *OED* for their plain use of our dictionary on a huge scale in the system of dates entered in *Webster's Ninth*. No such acknowledgment appeared in the “obvious” places, the Preface itself (p. 6) and the section on p. 17 about Dates. But towards the end (p. 27) of a long essay called “The English Language in the Dictionary”, which unfortunately I did not read, there is a handsome reference to numerous source-dictionaries including “the majestic thirteen-volume Oxford English Dictionary and its supplements.” Had I read this essay to the bitter end that part of my article would never have been written, and I am sorry for the anguish that my words must have given to those concerned.

IN THE MARGIN

Suspicion by Omission

By Melvin J. Lasky



ON THE DAY I left New York City London for Boston the Northwest Airlines stewardess kindly supplied me with the morning's newspapers. According to the headlines on both sides of the Atlantic, mayhem was in progress. *The Guardian*

reported that, on the one side, the Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire police chiefs were worried that the miners' strike pickets were getting out of hand; on the other, Mr Tony Benn, MP, was charging that it was only "a police riot", instigated by Mrs Thatcher's provocateurs.

What was happening in Lawrence, Massachusetts, was rather less clear, if possible; and in some confusion I leafed through all the papers I could find in Logan Airport. The banner headlines of the next day indicated that the local police were still desperately trying to control the rioting. Troopers were trying to stop angry crowds and gangs on the rampage; firemen were busy putting out fires and disposing of garbage-cans burning in the middle of Lawrence streets. Who was fighting whom? and why? For a moment I had a little nostalgia for the hard ideological lines of the Old World, where a class struggle is a class struggle.

Only a limited amount of light was shed on the subject by the *Boston Globe*, the famous New England newspaper. Its accounts showed the politicians blustering and filibustering in their usual way, and the Lawrence alderman in charge of public safety was quoted as saying:

"It was an isolated incident over nothing important. It was not racial. It was simply a warm night, tempers were high. . . . Things just got away with themselves."

Accordingly one's immediate suspicion was that it was, once again, "Whites" v. "Blacks." But the press also reported that Puerto Rican women had been complaining that they had been subjected to racial taunts from "Americans." But who were they? White Americans, brown ones, black ones, yellow ones? (On another page, covering another story, the paper used the odd phrase "Native Americans" . . . referring to some Indian tribes on an Arizona reservation.) That evening in Providence, and perhaps Rhode Island was far enough away to have more perspective, the local evening newspaper revealed that when the police moved in to declare an absolute curfew in Lawrence

they had made megaphone announcements in English, Spanish, and French! Well, the first is obvious; Spanish, understandably, because this is an area of so-called "Portuguese" settlements and Puerto Ricans emigrated there because of its attractive Hispanic ethnicity. But the French? It turned out, after much finger-flicking research at the hotel's newspaper-stand, that there was a substantial French-Canadian community in Lawrence. Were these the "Americans" who were doing the taunting? At any rate somebody, in the phrase of the *Journal-Bulletin*, was "raising a ruckus"; and if I couldn't quite figure out *who* was "ruckusing", and *why* (it wasn't the hate, it was the humidity), I was pleased to note that after 48 hours or so, in which your friendly neighbourhood police were described as moving in with "snarling attack dogs on leashes", Lawrence was brought back to law-and-order, and Mayor John J. Buckley could remind one and all that their town had "a long and proud history of being a city of immigrants." The *Boston Globe* reported:

"In an effort to defuse the tense situation last night, area clergymen organized an ecumenical service in front of an abandoned fire house at the corner of Oxford and Lowell Streets. With an electric piano and bongo drums playing in front of a wooden cross, a group from St. Augustine's Roman Catholic Church sang 'the Lord's Prayer'. . . ."

Our press was running true to form, telling us more about everything we didn't have to know, and sedulously omitting essentials.

I HAVE GOOD REASON to suspect that this is not a mere accident of careless reporting under the pressure of a fast-breaking story, but rather a reflection of our new cultural predicament where the precarious balance of disruptive forces dictates that no potentially explosive truths be told. The motives are doubtless well-meaning. Yet how an informed public opinion can ever develop under such self-censored circumstances—much less come to wise and prudent conclusions about properly ordering a multiracial and ethnically plural society—is quite beyond me.

In more optimistic and hopeful years, some twenty years ago, I once tried to argue the problem with the editors of *The New York Times*. I confessed to the distinguished managing editor, Mr A. M. Rosenthal, that I was more bewildered every day by the full-page coverage which his paper had been energetically devoting to a situation of racial tension in Brooklyn that had alarmed the entire nation. Thousands of agitated citizens were milling about the streets; the atmosphere was explosive; police were alerted for riot and violence; the fire brigades were in readiness for arson; shopkeepers were boarding up their shops in fear of looting. What had happened?

Well, apparently, the academic officials of Brooklyn College had asked the FBI to help with the proliferating hard-drugs problem on the campus. The city had approved, for the hospitals were overcrowded with appalling cases; and this was when the pushing had to stop. One suspect was trapped on a street-corner: a young student, of hitherto good record and repute. The FBI moved to the arrest; the young man broke

away and fled. At one point in the chase, according to *The New York Times*, he seemed to turn and reach into his jacket. The FBI shot; the student ~~was~~ dead. In the next 24 to 48 hours the neighbourhood seethed with anger and agitation. A riot of major proportions seemed imminent.

Coming from abroad, one followed the drama with a certain Henry Jamesian innocence: I simply could not quite comprehend what was transpiring. The *Times*, loyal to its famous motto, was only publishing "all the news fit to print." From a Washington newspaper I ultimately, and unfittingly, learned that the shot student was a black, and it was the black or Negro community, amounting to a million in Brooklyn, which seethed with a sense of outrage. How could we know any of this? The blacks in an all-Negro neighbourhood felt "victimized"; one of their own had again been "martyred." From a subsequent *Times* report one could learn, in the forty-second jump-story paragraph on page 43, that when the young student had turned and reached into his jacket, he was taken to be reaching for a gun; and that when he was searched he had on his person a loaded pistol and a substantial quantity of heroin. Neither of these facts makes an ugly situation any prettier. But the duty of all the press was to report them, to "tell the truth"—and here the placement of facts, and how the truth is paragraphed, is of decisive importance. It could make the difference, in an agitated community, between riot and remorse: between mindless anger and tragic understanding.

THIS WAS NO ISOLATED INCIDENT, and it did not come from nowhere. The whole corps of editors and political journalists have nowadays arrogated to themselves a power to disclose and to withhold as they please. The government's secrets are open prey to investigative journalists; their own media secrets are classified and to be protected by the force of the law. They are the arbiters over which facts it is socially constructive and ethically progressive to reveal—and which are to be held back lest regrettable reactionary consequences ensue. This is not only an indefensible, unjustifiable entitlement, but also an outlandishly mistaken strategy.

If memory serves, I think I can remember when the kindly, charitable self-censorship began. It must have been some time after the horrific riots in Harlem in the wartime 1940s (about which Ralph Ellison wrote his impressive novel, *Invisible Man*) when in New York, and elsewhere, news-stories no longer referred to the race, colour, or ethnic origins of persons arrested, criminals sentenced, gang-leaders apprehended. The tactics of benevolence suggested that the tactful omission of the designation of "Negro" (later, black), or whatever, would help assuage troubled race relations. But, as the ironies and paradoxes of good will would have it, the very opposite was soon seen to be the case. Of course, there could be no mistaken identities when "Lepke" Buchhalter was indicted and convicted as an accomplice of *Murder Incorporated*, or when Tammany's notorious Frank Costello came to trial. But what of the news items naming a George Jackson, or a Henry Whitehouse, or a William Henry Jones? Good Anglo-Saxon names, all; and when the newspaper-reader read of their

felonies, was he in point of fact relieved of his "racial suspicions"? Quite the contrary. It was suspicion by omission. Even if Mr Jackson and Mr Jones were "Caucasians", and they might well be, the general tendency was, alas, to conclude that all crimes and criminals—if there was no obvious nomenclatural evidence to the contrary ("Buggsy" Siegel, Vito Genovese, *et al.*)—were to be attributed to you-know-who. . . .

Words and names on the police blotter are too important to be left to the precinct's reporters; and their (or their editors') thoughtless and arbitrary manipulations of journalistic practice in the cause of ethnic benevolence have proved, in this case and in innumerable others (in Ken Livingstone's London this needs no emphasis), to be part not of the healing process but of the exacerbation of harm and hate. When quacks prescribe, wounds continue to fester.

NOR IS THE IMPERATIVE all one-sided, an embarrassing matter of negative image-making. Since none of us is without a certain enlightened sympathy with peoples and races who have suffered grievous harm due to race, religion, or previous condition of servitude, it is obvious that we would also want to participate in positive image-making, to register the good as well as the bad news. Surely we would want to know whether the George Carver Washington who was elected the other day to edit the *Harvard Law Review* was (as he would be, at long last) the first American Negro to be so honoured?

I am not sure that it is altogether satisfactory for human beings to be so "racially tagged", to find themselves in a kind of permanent identity parade. But the "Ethnic Revolution" (as Professor Nathan Glazer calls it) through which we have been living makes knowing *who-is-who* inevitable, for purposes of pride as well as shame, for better or worse. Neither educators nor immigration officials, nor housing officers nor hospital doctors, can afford not to pay attention, not to take note. An English community wants to know how its new Asian or West Indian immigrant community is faring (how big it is; what its birth-rate comes to; whether all the children, girls included, attend school regularly; how high the unemployment percentage is). An American "affirmative action" reformer demands to know the colour and ethnic origins of applicants for government jobs and medical-school places. A slum doctor in Harlem or Watts is scientifically handicapped without careful correlations between, say, sickle-cell anaemia (which evidently afflicts mainly persons of Black African origin) and whatever categories of racial classification we may devise or revise.

But we have in recent years substituted for the old Victorian tabu of sex the new tabu of so-called "racism." In the course of this transvaluation of values we have become frightened out of our wits by the semantic spooks of a changing vocabulary: by obscenities which have become standard, by old colourful words which have suddenly been interdicted. "Golliwogs", one notes, are now to be forbidden by Ken Livingstone's London administration, the little dolls (or the black figurines on your jam jar) constituting nothing less than a "racial slur." An English police inspector was forced to retire the other day because he used the word "nig-nogs"—which, presumably, was taken to suggest *nig* for "niggers" and *nogs* for "wogs",

although the etymology was spurious and the term was rather one of some affection and often used by Northumberland grandmothers about their unruly grandchildren. . . .

AN IRRITABILITY on the subject has been taking on the proportions of a plague-like eczema.¹ Part of the disease, I

¹ It is, of course, not a new phenomenon in England. As Cromwell memorably put it—in 1655, thinking of his own puritan movement's radical-left (Charles Firth, *Oliver Cromwell*, 1900, p. 368):

"Is there not yet a strange itch upon the spirit of men? Nothing will satisfy them unless they can press their finger upon their brethren's conscience to pinch them there. . . ."

have been trying to suggest, is the reprehensible self-censorship in the public prints, a combination of cowardice (in the face of small, militant cliques who have appointed themselves to be the keepers of the word) and ideological arrogance. For the manipulators in authority are quite ready to force one and all to become as enlightened, altruistic, and forward-looking as they take themselves to be. On all these issues I myself am not sure what the ideal or even the advisable solution should be. But surely one can call out to the journalists, in the spirit of Orwellian scepticism, to consider whether they could conceivably be mistaken. The truth may wound, but possibly (as André Gide suggested) only to cure. In any case: Orwell, thou should'st be living at this hour! we have need of thee. . . .

AUTHORS

Patricia Daly began writing soon after the War, when her work appeared in *Penguin Parade*, *Writing Today*, and *PEN New Poems*. After working for the British Council for a number of years, she returned to writing and has been published in *Arts Council New Poetry*, *Cornish Review*, *Women Writing* (Sidgwick & Jackson 1980). She is also a contributor to *Stories of Haunted Inns* and *Ghostly Stories*, coming shortly from William Kimber. She has recently completed three novels.

Gordon Crovitz was the editorial page editor in Brussels of *The Wall Street Journal/Europe*; this autumn he returned to New York where he is an editorial writer for the US edition. He is the author of a pamphlet, *Europe's Siberian Gas Pipeline: Economic Lessons and Strategic Implications* (Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies), and has contributed to many publications including *Time* and *The Washington Post*. He is a graduate of the University of Chicago, has a degree in law from Wadham College, Oxford, where he was a Rhodes Scholar, and is currently completing a doctorate in law at Yale.

George Watson, who is a Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge, is editor of the Liberal "Unservile State Group" and author of *Politics and Literature in Modern Britain*, *Story of the Novel* (Macmillan, 1977, 1979), and *Nationalisation: The End of an Illusion?* (Poland Street Publications, 1983); he edited *The Shorter New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* (1981). His contributions to *ENCOUNTER* include "Who Are the Conservatives?" (December 1983), "Was Marx an Ancient Historian?" (November 1981), and "Political Language & Its Disrepair" (June 1980).

Michael Hulse taught for several years at the Catholic University of Eichstadt and at the University of Erlangen. He won the National Poetry Competition in 1978. His first book of poems, *Knowing and Forgetting*, appeared from Secker & Warburg in 1981. "Deutschland, Deutschland" is included in his new book, *Propaganda*, which is due from the same publishers in March 1985.

Jean-François Revel, whose "Paris Notebook" is appearing regularly in *ENCOUNTER* (see his first column in the September/October issue), writes for *Le Point*, the French weekly news magazine. His books include *The Totalitarian Temptation* (n.e. Penguin, 1978) and *Without Marx or Jesus* (n.e. Paladin, 1972). His most recent book, *How Democracies Perish*, will be published this year by Doubleday.

Edward Pearce is a leader writer and Parliamentary sketch writer on the *Daily Telegraph*. His book *The Senate of Lilliput* was published by Faber in 1983.

Derwent May is Literary Editor of *The Listener*. His most recent novel, *The Revenger's Comedy*, was published by Chatto & Windus in 1979. He is co-author of *A New Introduction to English Literature*, published by Oxford University Press. His study, *Proust*, appeared last year in their Past Masters series.

John Wood is Deputy Director of the Institute of Economic Affairs in London.

Philip Larkin's *Required Writing*, a selection of his essays, was brought out last year by Faber, who also published his most recent volume of poems, *High Windows*.

Malcolm Bradbury is Professor of American Studies at the University of East Anglia. In January and February 1983, *ENCOUNTER* published excerpts from his latest work of literary criticism, *The Modern American Novel* (Oxford University Press). His latest novel, *Rates of Exchange*, came out last year (Secker & Warburg).

John Weightman was until his recent retirement Professor of French at Westfield College, London. He is the author, among other books, of *The Triumph of the Avant-Garde* (1973), editor of *Masterworks of the French Cinema* (1974), and translator, with Doreen Weightman, of the works of Claude Lévi-Strauss.

John Mole's volume of poems, *In and Out of the Apple*, was published earlier this year by Secker who in 1981 brought out his earlier collection, *Feeding the Lake*.

Laurence Urdang, a lexicographer responsible for the publication of over 100 dictionaries and other reference books, is the Editor of *Verbatim* and publisher of Verbatim Books.

Robert Burchfield, Chief Editor of the Oxford English Dictionaries, is the author, among other books, of *The Spoken Word: A BBC Guide* (1981).

LETTERS

Pearce's Change of Mind

IN HIS ARTICLE on the Foreign Office ("London Commentary", July-August), Edward Pearce signals a personal change of mind on the particular matter of the Falklands War. At the time, he got it wrong, he says—and tells us why. From which I gather that he got it right, but now, apparently regressing suddenly into the national self-denigration of the Sixties ("a low contracting party"—"an unsuccessful commercial nation"—"the small doings of a small island state", etc.) he writes off the Falklands as "a sort of dream": that "absurd war" of Continental opinion, fought for "a few thousand acres of grade-five, uncultivable, water-sodden ground"—in short, an exercise in failed materialism.

There was a joke on the "Johnny Carson Show" in America about Mrs Thatcher viewing "the spoils of war in the Falkland Islands—half a million sheep and a photomat." This was funny. But one could offer an amendment here: the sheep, the photomat, those water-sodden acres—and the freedom of Argentina.

Of course, the actual war aims were different. Apart from the necessity of demonstrating, to interested watchers, the fact that a British garrison (Britain being "the Fortress of the North Atlantic") cannot be overrun and humiliated gratis, the original intention was to secure the freedom of the Falkland Islanders. There are 1,800 of them; and that's a lot. While achieving these aims, the parliamentary democracy of Great Britain completely discredited the Argentinian junta in the one thing they were supposed to be good at: war. This was the first step on their road out of power and into jail. There is now a government of decency in Argentina. And Mrs Jeane Kirkpatrick incidentally (and partly as a result of the action she opposed) has a much more presentable ally in Buenos Aires.

Moreover, there was another indirect and highly beneficial result, concerning which I'm in a position to say something. I refer to the junta's unofficial ally of the day, on the other side of the South Atlantic—the country which came under the *Afrikaner Broederbond* three years after Hitler blew his brains out.

SOUTH AFRICA, it may be said, was the only Allied country that lost the Second World War. *Apartheid* was an anti-liberal, anti-Western, anti-British ideology of State-run ethno-social engineering, which developed in the Hitler-Stalin era, and exhibited features indeed common to both, as well as those exclusive to one, of those two totalitarian systems. Now, more than 40 years later, the tide may be turning for South Africa too. A great amount of ideological fog has been condensing into clarity lately, and the victory

of democracy in the Falklands (and in Argentina) has proved to be an element in the cooling process. After all, nothing succeeds like success. British and democratic traditions, finding their home mainly among English South Africans, have been strengthened by these events. Opposing forces have been weakened. The glee stored up by the *Afrikaner* Nationalist press in anticipation of a disaster for "decadent" Britain in the Falklands, went suddenly rank; and a certain mutual arrogance, existing between the *Broederbond* and the Galtieri junta, came to a similar quick end (the torturer and murderer Alfredo Astiz, who exhibited his idea of soldierly courage in war by scribbling graffiti on a document of surrender, was an ornament of the Nationalist cocktail circuit in his diplomatic days).

More generally, South Africa has gained a certain large perspective from the events of 1982—namely, an awareness of the geopolitical maxim: "History is made in the Northern Hemisphere." This means in modern terms that no Southern government can do without the protection of either America or Russia; as the hapless junta discovered when they lost one without gaining the other. If the South African government want the full support of America and the Western world, they will have to return to Western ways; and they know it. The first reluctant acknowledgment of the fact has already been made, in their new constitutional reforms (or "reforms" . . . it depends on your point of view). The real point is that the Falklands War showed them in a graphic way just where the history is made; so now they know.

In Argentina, then, a new government. In South Africa, an old government with considerable and beneficial disturbance of mind, at the least. These incidental results of the war are among the small doings of a small island-state which need not be relegated altogether to obscurity. Added to the intentional achievement (which was real), they make up not a bad moral and political score for an unsuccessful commercial nation and a low contracting party.

SO EDWARD PEARCE should come back out of the 1960s, elevate his rhetoric, and re-revise his opinion. And incidentally, he gets *Rule Britannia* wrong again. The word is "rule"—never "rules." The lines are not a vulgar boast, but a prophetic injunction to Britain to maintain the defence of her ancient liberties. There is no trace of imperialism.

*Thee haughty tyrants ne'er shall tame:
All their attempts to bend thee down,
Will but arouse thy generous flame;
But work their woe, and thy renown.
"Rule Britannia, rule the waves;
Britons never will be slaves."*

Note too that the word is "will", not "shall." The likes of Astiz found out the difference.

M. M. CARLIN

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Was Krivitsky Murdered?

LEO VALIANI, in his memoir of Arthur Koestler (July/August) writes that Koestler had based his novel *Darkness at Noon*, in part, on some revelations by "one of the GPU leaders, General Walter Krivitsky", who had fled to the West in 1937-38, and who later "was found mysteriously hanged in a room in New York."

Mr Valiani is a distinguished historian, but he must have been writing from memory. Mnemosyne by herself, however, plays strange transpositions on the mind. Walter Krivitsky had been Chief of Military Intelligence for the Red Army in Western Europe. On 11 February 1941, his body was found, with a single bullet in his head, in a locked hotel room in Washington D.C. The coroner ruled it a suicide.

The revelations of General Krivitsky created a sensation when he surfaced before a Congressional committee in the US in 1939. The Communist press sought to discredit him. *The New Masses*, the Communist weekly, ran a feature article stating that General Krivitsky was a sham and that he was actually "Schmelka Ginsberg." It is true that his original name was Samuel Ginsberg (Schmelka being an awkward diminutive), but none the less he had been an important figure in Russian Intelligence. The writer of the *New Masses* article was Richard Rovere, the eminent American journalist, who left the Communist movement after the Nazi-Soviet pact in August 1939, and thereafter stated that this article, whose material had been given to him by the Party, was one of the most shameful in his life.

When the news came of Krivitsky's suicide, many persons, including his lawyer, Louis Waldman, declared that it was murder. Yet there was no overt evidence of that act. Leo Valiani, in a footnote, states that Krivitsky "figures in a moving book, *Our Own People* by Elizabeth Poretsky." Mrs Poretsky was the widow of Ignace Reiss (a pseudonym hastily adopted in flight) who had been head of the Comintern espionage in Western Europe, who had broken with the Party after the purges, and who had written a strong "Open Letter" to the Russian Party, denouncing its actions. He had been tracked down and murdered in Switzerland, as later evidence showed, by Communist agents led to him by a friend who had betrayed him. Mrs Poretsky knew Krivitsky probably better than anyone else. She was critical of his character and even of some of his claims and information. Yet her testimony is relevant. She writes, on the closing page of her book, before the Epilogue:

"Krivitsky . . . after the war began . . . made a trip to Britain to talk to officials there. . . . On his return to America he lived in relative security and even affluence from the sale of his articles. His family was safe and well cared for, he had friends, it seemed he could start a new

life. But something else had happened. For the first time he had the leisure to see himself in his new situation. He had broken with his old life and had not built a new one. He went to a hotel in Washington, wrote a letter to his wife and one to his new friends, and put a bullet through his head.

His friends did not believe in his suicide. They could not understand why he should kill himself when he was safe and had no financial problems. Nor did suicide fit the character his friends had created in his book. They said unanimously that he had been murdered. The letters, they said, had been dictated at gunpoint. But to those who knew his handwriting, his style, his expressions, there could be no doubt that he had written them. The hotel staff testified that no one else had been seen going to his room. He was found fully dressed except for his shoes, on the bed with the gun by his temple, the letters on the table, the door locked from the inside. He died on the 11th of February 1941, the day I arrived in the United States."

I should say, since I write on this matter, that of the hundreds of memoirs by former Communists and Soviet émigrés, Mrs Poretsky's book is one of the more important, and unjustly neglected, pictures we have of the chilling nature of Stalinism. Her account, simple in tone, is about a group of young idealists (including her husband and Walter Krivitsky) who joined the Communist Party in Russia during the Revolution and, by an act of fate, were recruited into the *Cheka* and into the espionage networks. Her book deals with the way many of these individuals, some of whom served as the interrogators of the "Old Bolsheviks" in the Purge Trials, were trapped in their roles and lived schizophrenic lives. The most chilling episodes are of her conversations with many of these persons in Moscow, in 1937, when she returned to see if she could find some support for her husband. The book was published in the UK in 1969 by Oxford University Press, with an introduction by F. W. Deakin, the former Warden of St Antony's College, Oxford.

M. J. DEBELIUS

New York

Smolka "the Spy"

A Letter from Vienna—By SARAH GAINHAM

A FLOOD OF MEMORIES wells up at a name in Stephen de Mowbray's fascinating article ("Soviet Deception & the Onset of the Cold War", *ENCOUNTER*, July/August).

Well, probably Harry Peter Smolka was a Soviet agent in some sense. He was an unabashed Russian propagandist when I first met him in June 1947, and he certainly then had influence with the Soviet authorities in Vienna, for things happened that could not possibly have done so without their co-operation. However, we are here in an area of experience where Foreign Office documents provide no help, and there does not seem to be much other evidence either. In the short entry on Smollett-Smolka in Chapman Pincher's *Their Trade is Treachery* (p. 114) there is a mistake that makes it suspect, even if Anthony Blunt's assertion that Smolka was "a professional KGB agent" is accepted. By definition, self-confessed life-long liars do not make reliable witnesses.

The error is that Smolka is defined as an Austrian journalist. At some time in the 1930s Peter Smolka and his wife became British citizens, and their two sons were born British. As for Smolka being a journalist, it was so, but in the same sense that many men at that time became soldiers: he had to earn a living when the family company was confiscated in Vienna. He went to London as the representative of that company when he was twenty in the early 1930s. It became his sole property when the family returned to Vienna in 1946, most other relations having suffered an unknown but certain fate during

the War. Their family house was recovered at the same time. The company was, and is, a smallish but prosperous manufactory of light-metal goods, and made a fortune before the War by inventing the first ski-binding that snapped open when twisted in a fall. Factory and offices are in Schwechat, just south-east of Vienna, which until 1955 was in the Soviet Occupied Zone of Austria. That is an important detail, for it provides a strong motive for whatever Smolka did as "a Soviet agent" during and after the War.

BRIEFLY, all Austro-Jewish property was confiscated by the German occupiers after the *Anschluss* in 1938. Much small property (shops, houses, etc.) was given to Nazis as *NSDAP* patronage, the larger concerns being *Reich* property. When the Red Army occupied Vienna in April 1945, one of their first military ordinances nationalised all property of Germany or Germans. They stuck stubbornly to this when the occupation was shared with the three Western Allies, and in their Zone of Occupation it was an almost invariable rule, including housing, and including the Soviet Sector of Vienna. Elsewhere housing and other property was gradually recovered by Jewish owners or their heirs by due process of law. The protracted lawsuit over the house rented by the BBC correspondent made the quick and easy return of the Smolka house noticeable. This was explained as being the home of a British citizen in the British sector of Vienna (and

by Peter Smolka being cleverer than most people).

But the ownership of the Schwechat factory was in another category altogether, and as far as my own knowledge goes it was the only case of a Germanised firm becoming private property in the Soviet Zone. No doubt there were other cases, for most beneficiaries of Russian favour kept quiet about it; and of course it was never admitted that Smolka had been favoured. However, they did not hide their ownership any more than they hid their political views: Peter Smolka was a declared "man of the Left"; and his wife, who became and remained a friend of mine, was a dedicated Communist.

WHEN I WENT TO Vienna as the wife of a newspaper correspondent, I left England for the first time. I knew no German, almost no European history, and felt myself to be one of the victors in a conquered enemy city. I was also in the state of ignorant adulation of the Russians which was near-universal in the London we had just left. The Russians cured me within a month or so, the first shock being appearances, for Red Army soldiers were then visible every day and were dirty, unkempt, unsoldierly. It was nothing to see a Russian soldier raise the stock of his machine pistol (they were always armed) against someone in his way in the street, and even to strike out with it.

To a Londoner that was as horrifying as the constant accounts of "men in military uniform" raping, looting and killing, for such things could not happen to me and were at first discounted out of the prevailing Allied hatred of everything German. But a man trying to escape from a police jeep being dragged along the street by one foot until a crowd gathered and he got away, his head covered with blood . . . a shape lying on the pavement covered by a blanket from which blood seeped . . . such sights in a major city are shocks one does not forget. They were made sharper by the strict discipline of the three other occupying armies. My hero-worship was replaced by a fear that sometimes reached horror, much deeper than the fear caused by bombing during the War. The cure was permanent.

OTHER NEW THINGS were pleasanter, including many new acquaintances. One of the first to introduce himself was Peter Smollett, as the correspondent of the *Daily Express*, and within a week or so I was invited to his home and met his wife Lotte, and Tommy and Timmy, then about eight and six. They became Smolka, and there was no more pretence about their being Viennese than there was about their politics. Nor did they pretend that incidents such as I have described did not happen, including the constant disappearances of Austrian citizens. They were admitted, and passed over.

It must have been early on that Peter told me about being in Moscow during the War as editor of a news-sheet called *British Ally* (run

Life & Letters Today



GLASGOW
ORWELL "84" PRIZE: Arthur Scargill's mastery of "Newspeak" is so impressive as to make him the outstanding Orwellian personality of 1984 [writes Professor Thomas Wilson, University of Glasgow]. When he asserts that the NUM is a democratic union, this means "democratic" in the East European sense. When he claims to be defending the coal industry, this means he is defending its inefficiency to the mutual hurt of the captive British users of coal and of the industry itself.

When he says he is ready to negotiate, this means he is ready to accept the unconditional surrender of the other side. When he complains that Britain is a police state, this means the police should acquiesce in violent intimidation. When he poses as the defender of trade union rights, this means he is pursuing a strategy that would ultimately result in their being made totally subservient to communist-type authority.

His condemnation of "Solidarity" is an illustration of this attitude. The behaviour of his "red guards" [picket-line violence] affords a preliminary indication of the methods to be followed.

THE TIMES

LONDON
PASTICHE: Journalists keep on writing exposés, boring books, written in a self-important, shrill illiterate style. The most recent is an exposé of the disgraceful governmental system of secrets. I doubt [Auberon Waugh writes] whether many people will read it.

"We have failed to build an adequate information base for the voter", they squeak. "Until we do, the British political process will remain a pastiche of democracy."

I do not suppose these brave campaigners know the meaning of the word "pastiche." A pastiche is a work of art in the style of another artist.

But if they thought it meant "mockery" or "perversion"—perhaps they were thinking of "parody"—they have got it about right.

DAILY MAIL

LONDON
MIXED MARES & CODED GEESE: Lord Bancroft, former head of the Civil Service, was interviewed about the GCHQ row (over trade-union rights in secret-intelligence establishments) on Radio 4's "The World This Weekend" yesterday, and managed the mixed metaphor of the month. Declining to answer a particular question, he said:

"That's an invitation to cock my leg over a wild goose and go off into a mare's nest."

THE STANDARD

LONDON
UNPATRIOTIC FREUD? I must apologise [writes John O'Sullivan] to readers for mis-spelling "Britannia" as "Brittania" in most editions of last week's column. This escaped readers' notice until Mr Joe Haines of the "Daily

Mirror" waxed sarcastic about it on "What The Papers Say."

Alas, I also confused the Freudian concepts of "transference" and "projection." That slip, however, inspired quite a large number of letters, phone calls and personal rebukes.

What this signifies is that, even among "Daily Telegraph" readers, there is greater knowledge of Freudian theory than of patriotic symbolism. I find this very disquieting.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

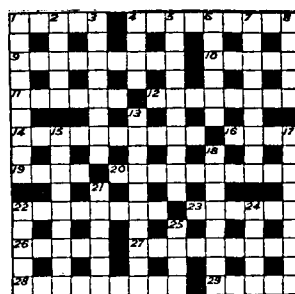
WESTMINSTER
HISTORY MAN: During questions in the House of Lords about parking in Old Palace Yard, Lord Stewart of Fulham asked about the statue of Richard I. Labour's former Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, began life as a schoolmaster. The Chairman of Committees, Lord Aberdare, arranged for one of the Clerks, Miss F. P. Tudor, to send Stewart the details. In thanking Aberdare, he remarked how curious it was that

"a Tudor had informed a Stewart about a Plantagenet."

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

CAMBRIDGE
OXBRIDGE UNION: Experts on Intelligence gathered in Cambridge for a forum on Talpidology (the study of moles) last week. Not 400 yards from the former burrow of Anthony Blunt and other Trinity College men, Chapman Pincher (author of "Their Trade is Treachery") said it was now "more probable than ever" that former MI5 chief, Sir Roger Hollis, had worked for the Russians. If true—which Hollis's friends deny—it would even things up. Hollis was an Oxford man.

THE OBSERVER



LONDON
SQUARE ONE: It is not often that "The Times" has to eat its words, let alone its cross-words. But a new history of the crossword puzzle, published soon by Papermac, recalls our initial reaction in 1925: it threatened Western civilization because it would make "devastating inroads on the working hours of every rank of society."

A few weeks later we were forced to concede that the craze had "crossed the Atlantic with the speed of a meteorological depression." But it took another five years before the editor's resistance was finally broken down by a barrage of readers' letters.

THE TIMES

by the British Embassy or the Military Mission). I recall questioning him eagerly about wartime Moscow, which I would not have done a little later. He was, as always, amusing on the subject—and devious. He explained that the Soviet system was “more democratic” than the British thought, for although there were no opposing parties, the government and Party discussed policy thoroughly until a consensus was reached. He must rightly have judged my ignorance to be complete. There were a number of such conversations; they gradually ceased.

In November *Picture Post* wanted an article on a foreign correspondent's life in an Occupied city, and Peter Smolka proposed this to my husband as something in his gift. Smolka had the permits necessary to go to such places as Klosterneuburg, impossible to get from the Russians except on an official level. He also invited us and the photographer, the wife of the editor of *Picture Post*, to dine at the British Officers' Club in Palais Kinsky with a woman Russian colonel, whose picture duly appeared with us all in the magazine. This was something so unheard-of that even I could see something odd in it. It could only have occurred with official Soviet approval, and to get permission for foreign publicity of that kind *proved* intimate and high-level contacts.

THE ELECTIONS AFTER the *coup d'état* in February 1948 in Czechoslovakia were covered by every accredited newsmen in Vienna. It became clear that we were in disfavour, and a Czech interpreter “blabbed” to my husband that he and another correspondent had been denounced by Smolka as spies. This did not mean that the denouncer believed what he said; the two chosen were by character, experience, and knowledge potentially dangerous antagonists of the Communist cause. It indicated a wish to please the new Czech government, and therefore the Russians who were the direct manipulators of the takeover. Peter Smolka could not have known that his intrigue would be reported to one of its objects; but he can hardly have expected to keep it secret, since journalists talk so much. His identity was confirmed a little later by a British official and much later to me by a refugee Czech who had spent years in prison after the purges. The interest of this incident is not that Smolka would do such a thing—any Communist would—but that his concern to please the Russians was of much greater moment to him than his position with the British.

That made sense. His British passport and accreditation were important in the starving chaos of immediately post-War Austria, and without them he could not even enter the country. But increasingly his energies were engaged in the rebuilding of his business—the future of his family—which depended on active Russian goodwill, it being in the Soviet Zone. His family was always Smolka's real concern, and the longer I knew him the clearer that became. Certainly he was a Soviet propagandist during and after World War II.

furthering their interests where he could. Whether he was also an informant of theirs is, in the nature of things, unsure. But I fear he must have been while he was at the Ministry of Information and in Moscow where he would know something of what went on in the Embassy and the Military Mission: for such a reward as the return of his property in Austria after the War, the Soviets would exact the highest price. And in Stalin's time, for the arrangement to work it must have been agreed on a fairly high level. By the end of the 1940s Smolka was doing as little as he could as a journalist and, I believe, as an agent too; for he never showed any interest in contact with senior British officers who were friends of ours in Vienna. He was becoming again what he would always have been, but for the Nazis: a Viennese businessman.

In about 1950 Peter Smolka contracted multiple sclerosis and was paralysed for 30 years until his death a year or so ago.

SARAH GAINHAM

Petronell, Austria

Young Hitchens at 35

HOW DOES ONE escape Leo Labedz's fork? A few years ago, Mr Labedz almost had me ostracised by praising, in his anti-Deutscher polemic in *Survey*, an article I wrote about the planned, official deconstruction of Russian history. Now (“Can Orwell Survive 1984?”, June and July/August 1984) he seeks to impale me on his other prong, by associating me with views of George Orwell which I have never held. More, he refers to me as “young Christopher Hitchens”, at the precise moment when I seek to recover from fatherhood and from my thirty-fifth birthday. If this be patronising, I can't get enough of it.

But how to wriggle free? In a 1981 review of Claud Cockburn's memoir I called Claud “a great journalist” (true) and “a rank Stalinist” (also true). I contrasted him unfavourably with George Orwell, whose memory he often defamed. I am now denounced by Mr Labedz for mentioning the two names even in the same review. For good measure, he then points out for the general edification that Claud was—a rank Stalinist. Finally, and with sinister greybeard significance, he reveals my “juxtaposition” of the two men. I can scarcely imagine what he might have said if I had not mentioned Orwell at all. Perhaps, “It is no accident that young Christopher Hitchens fails to touch upon Cockburn's repudiation of Orwellian values.” A man who could describe my review of Bernard Crick's biography as “friendly” is capable of exerting great suasion over himself.

MR LABEDZ loftily criticises, but for space reasons does not detail, my exchange with Norman Podhoretz on the continuity of Orwell's principles. Astonishingly, he identifies his own article with the abysmal work of the editor of *Commentary*. Let me, for space

reasons of my own, invite your readers to judge on the basis of my article in the New York quarterly *Grand Street*. (Available from Ben Sonnenberg at 50, Riverside Drive, New York City, New York 10024.) They may, when they finally discover them, detest my opinions; but I can guarantee that they will like the magazine.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

“The Nation”
New York City

CONGRATULATIONS are in order on the birth of the younger Hitchens, who may well one day become a “Dreyfusard”, like Orwell and Cockburn. Meanwhile, one feels sure that the new young Hitchens will soon be reaching the mental age of good old Dad.

LEOPOLD LABEDZ

London

Grenada Jewel

ALL HAIL TO Sabina Lietzmann for writing, and to the Editor for publishing “On Not Landing in Grenada” (*ENCOUNTER*, September/October 1984). Nothing like it has appeared in the US press, not even in those journals which from time to time cluck about the responsibility of the Press.

Power corrupts, etc., as that great English historian wrote. Some day I hope *ENCOUNTER* will address itself to the alliance between the Press and the US Supreme Court, which resulted in 1964 in the abolition of the law of libel which had endured in the US, state by state, from colonial times. Ms. Lietzmann implies that the guarantee of freedom of the press is somehow hallowed by its association with the “hallowed” US Constitution. Such an implication is not borne out by US constitutional history. There is respectable authority for the belief that it was the statesmanlike High Court which teamed up with the Press to destroy a centuries-old legal protection to individuals libelled by the Press (cf. *New York Times v. Sullivan*, 1964).

ALBERT PUCCI

Tiskilwa
Illinois

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*'In the period
after the war
he was for my
young self
not far behind
Hart Crane,
Auden, Spender,
Dylan Thomas
as one of
the stars of poetry.'*

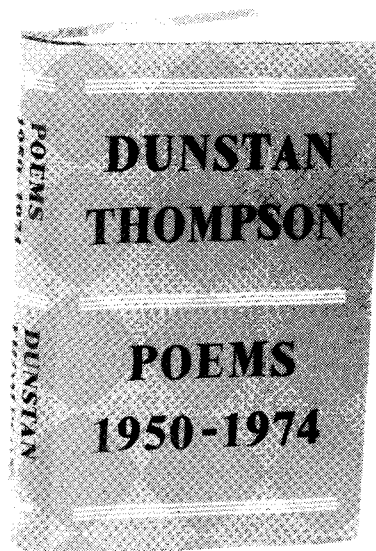
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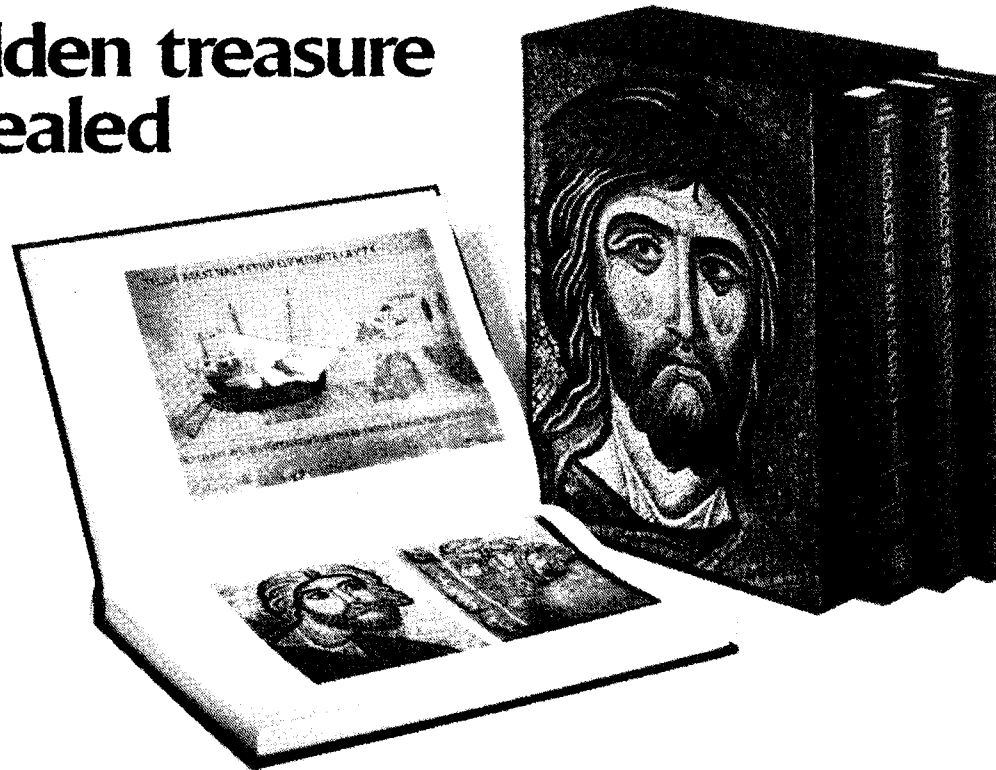
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